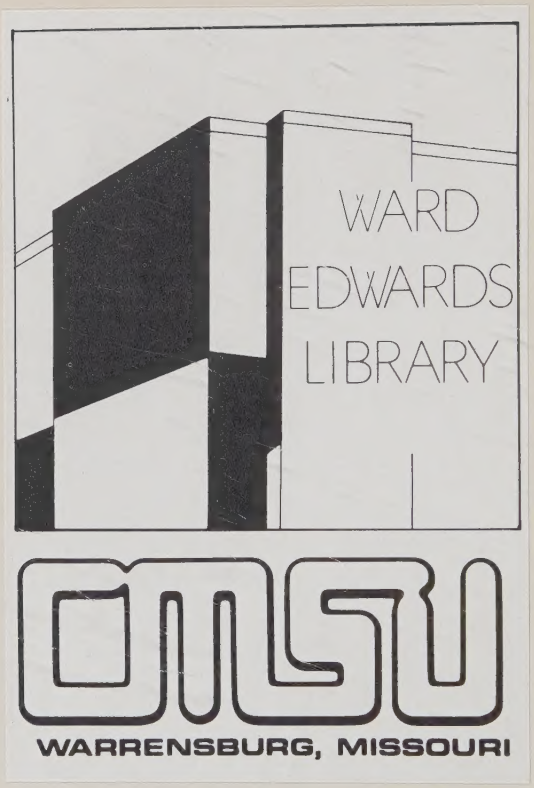

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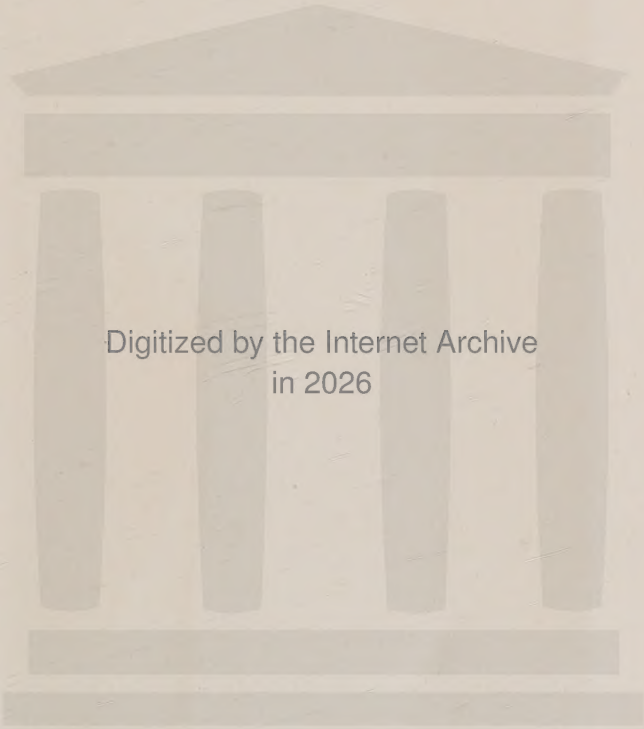
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Edition de Luxe

Militona

The Nightingales — Omphale
The Marchioness's Lap-Dog

Jack and Jill

The Thousand and Second Night
Elias Wildmanstadius
Daniel Jovard
The Bowl of Punch

By

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

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"Justina helped her mistress to rise and dress" . . . . . " 87, " II

"In the course of the next few days Mme. de Champrosé took care to show herself a good deal in public, in order to let everybody see that she was back in Paris". . . . . " 217, " II

MILITONA

Introduction

THE four tales contained in this volume — "Militona," "The Nightingales," "The Marchioness's Lap-Dog" and "Omphale" — are interesting in themselves, it is true, but especially interesting as exhibiting diverse aspects of Gautier's talent.

The first of the quartet is a reminiscence of that first visit to Spain, followed in after years by a second, that did so much to awaken, or more properly speaking, to give body and direction to Gautier's artistic instincts, and revealed to him his power as an incomparable writer of travels and scenes in foreign lands.

What mainly struck him on this first real voyage beyond the confines of France — for his brief trip to Belgium scarcely counts in the development of his talent — was the recollection of the Moorish past of Spain, of which abundant traces are to be met with in

the Spanish Peninsula; the splendour of the sunshine and the colouring, which appealed most forcibly and directly to him as a painter as well as a writer; the survival of costume unquestionably very picturesque, and which pleased him the more that not only was distinctive dress going out in the French provinces, but that the fashion of the day, even in Paris, was regretfully bad in taste; and the strong feeling of local colour which he found everywhere. Now, as local colour was the great fetich of the Romanticists, and as at the time Gautier first visited Spain he was a wild-haired member of the school and a devoted admirer and believer in Victor Hugo and all his works, the country impressed him to an extent that can be appreciated in its fulness only by reading his principal works in their entirety. The remembrances of Spain are ineffaceable in him; they crop up constantly and under the most unexpected circumstances. The mode of speech, the fashion of dress, the characteristic features, the national sport ever recur to him with an added charm. Nowhere did he find himself so completely in his element as in the Peninsula. His poetical work as well as his prose writings amply testify to the fact: one of his most striking poems in "Enamels and Cameos" has Spain

for a subject, and the " Rondalla " in the same volume has passed there from the story of Militona.

He was from the first an ardent admirer of the bull-fight and its attendant horrors: the ripping up of poor worn-out horses, the occasional maiming of picadores, chulos, or toreadors, and the invariable slaughter of the bulls themselves. This was partly temperamental; his Southern blood predisposed him to the enjoyment of spectacles that by most Northerners are looked upon as debasing and barbarous. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should have been minded to weave a love story around the incidents of a toreador's life, and that he should have produced " Militona."

The curious thing is that in his crusade against the parchment-faced, smooth-shaven bourgeois, and in his diatribes against civilisation and its deadening effect upon poetry and art in general, he should have made the truest representative of the picturesque and the uncivilised suffer bitter disappointment; though it may be that his love for a dramatic ending in keeping with Romanticist ideas of Spain induced him to sacrifice Juancho as he has done.

Yet the charm of the story resides in something quite outside the bull-fighting and the rancour of the torero.

It is not either so much in the loveliness of Militona or the affection of Don Andrès for ancient customs and sports, his helplessness in presence of Doña Feliciana, or his nascent love for the young manola. It lies in the vivid pictures that Gautier calls up constantly : the crowd hurrying to the Plaza de Toros; the slaying of the bull; the scene of the serenade and the duel; the interview between Militona and the torero, in presence of the wounded Andrès, but above all, the description of the home of the lovers in the Granada Gautier loved so well.

This latter passage has an interest of its own, for originally it formed, in an altered version, the opening of the tale, the scene of which was laid, not in Madrid, but in Granada itself. Only, instead of the house being described as beauteous in every respect, it was made to appear in bad taste; this in order to carry out the notion of ridicule that the author wished to attach to Feliciana first, and later to Sir Edward. But his heart failed him, apparently, and he revolted at the thought of making the piano strum in the neighbourhood of the Alhambra and the Generalif, and he wisely shifted his ground and kept the Moorish city for the setting of the attempt on Militona's life.

Very different is the short, sweet tale called "The Nightingales." Written for young people, and appearing first in a publication intended for them, it was composed in order to explain an engraving,—a common practice in those days, as Gautier has told us himself. But no one remembers the engraving, and everybody who has ever read "The Nightingales" keeps the quaint story in mind. It is a very delicate bit of work, written in a subdued tone, but none the less very telling. Gautier loved music, and in this brief sketch he has praised it as it deserves.

"The Marchioness's Lap-Dog" is in another strain. This time it is the eighteenth century which has attracted the author, and he has made a dainty little story out of a mere trifle, with just enough indication of the licentiousness of the age to be in keeping with the model he followed, yet not enough of it to spoil what is really a deftly touched story of a man's whim and a woman's caprice.

"Omphale" is purely fantastic; it does not pretend to be anything else. It belongs to the same class of story as "The Mummy's Foot," "Arria Marcella," and "The Vampire." It is not as long as any of these; it is not as important in the author's work, but it has

a witching grace of its own. Probably it was written partly to afford still another opportunity of describing tapestry and furniture and plate — in which Gautier always took much delight — but it is fanciful enough to excite and retain the reader's interest to the end.

"Militona" was published in instalments in *la Presse*, from January 1 to 16, 1647. It was republished in book form the same year, and in 1852 took its place among the "*Un Trio de Romans*" along with another story that will be contained in the next volume of this series. Juancho's serenade was also transferred to "Enamels and Cameos" in 1853, under the title "Rondalla."

"The Nightingales" appeared in *l'Amulette, étrenne à nos jeunes amis*, in 1833, and "Omphale," which at first had a sub-title, "The Tapestry in Love," saw the light in the *Journal des gens du monde*, in 1834.

Militona

MILITONA

I

ON a Monday in the month of June, 184–, *dia de toros*, as they say in Spain, a good-looking young fellow apparently very much out of humour, was proceeding towards a house in the Calle San Bernardo, situated within the most noble and most heroic city of Madrid.

The annoyance visible on the features of the young man was increased by the sound of the strumming of a piano audible through the open windows of the house. He stopped in front of the door, as if he hesitated about entering, but made up his mind quickly, overcame his repugnance, and let fall the knocker, the loud sound of which was repeated in the staircase by the noise of the heavy and awkwardly eager steps of the gallego who was hastening down to open.

It might have been supposed that some unpleasant business, a loan to be negotiated at usurious rates, a

debt to be paid, or a sermon to be listened to from an old and scolding relative was the cause of the cloud that lowered over the naturally bright face of Don Andrès de Salcedo. But it was nothing of the sort, for not being in debt, Don Andrès de Salcedo had no need to borrow money, and all his relatives being dead, he looked for no inheritance and thus feared not the remonstrances of any sour old aunt or grumpy uncle.

While it does not do credit to his gallantry, it must be owned that Don Andrès was simply on his way to visit his betrothed, Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios, as was his daily custom.

Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios was a young lady of good family, rather pretty and fairly rich, whom Don Andrès was engaged to marry ere long.

Assuredly this fact was not calculated to darken the brow of a young fellow of twenty-four, and the prospect of spending an hour or two with a *novia* who was barely "sweet sixteen" could not be very terrifying to contemplate.

As a bad temper does not prevent coquetry from asserting its rights, Andrès, who had thrown away his cigar at the foot of the steps, shook off, as he ascended the stairs, the white ashes that soiled the facings of his

coat, pushed back his hair, and gave an extra twist to his mustaches. At the same time he put off his look of annoyance, and the prettiest set smile flitted over his lips.

"I do hope," he said to himself as he entered the apartment, "that she will not take it into her head to make me practise with her that atrocious endless duet by Bellini, which has to be begun again a score of times! If she does I am sure to miss the first part of the fight and the face the alguazil will make when the gate is opened to let the bull rush in."

This was the fear that filled Don Andrès' soul, and it must be confessed that it was well-founded.

Feliciana, seated on a stool, and bending slightly forward, was studying the formidable score, opened at the dreaded place; her elbows turned well out on either side her waist, and her fingers outspread, she was engaged in striking loud chords, and going over a difficult passage with a perseverance worthy of a better cause.

She was so engrossed in her task that she did not notice the entrance of Don Andrès, whom the maid had allowed to go in unannounced, as one who was at home and soon to be her mistress' husband.

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Andrès, the sound of his footsteps deadened by the Manila straw matting that covered the bricked floor, reached the centre of the room without attracting the young girl's attention.

While Doña Feliciana is struggling with her piano, and Don Andrès remains standing behind her, uncertain whether he ought frankly to break in upon the row she is making or cough discreetly to make her aware of his presence, it may be as well to take a look at the place in which this is going on.

The walls were painted in flat distemper colouring, the windows and doors being adorned with imitation mouldings and framework in grisaille. A few mezzotint engravings, brought from Paris, — "Regret and Remembrance," "The Little Poachers," "Don Juan and Haidee," "Minna and Brenda," — were hung in most symmetrical fashion by green silk cords. Black horse-hair sofas, and chairs to match, the backs representing lyres, a mahogany bureau and table, adorned with sphinxes for handles, a remembrance of the conquest of Egypt, and a clock representing Esmeralda making her goat write Phœbus's name, flanked by two candelabra under glass shades, completed the tasteful furnishing of the room.

Swiss muslin curtains with large patterns and draped in pretentious fashion, with much stamped work on them, hung at the windows and reproduced in the most distressingly accurate manner the designs scattered the world over by Paris upholsterers in fashion papers and lithographed circulars. But I am bound to add that these curtains excited general admiration and envy.

It would be unjust to pass in silence over a whole pack of little dogs in spun glass, numbers of groups in modern china, filigree baskets filled with enamelled flowers, paper-weights in alabaster, and Spa-wood boxes enriched with coloured ornaments, all of which brilliant superfluities, intended to reveal Feliciana's intense love of art, were crowded upon whatnots. For Feliciana Vasquez had been brought up in the French fashion and trained to hold the mode of the day in the deepest respect. Consequently, at her request, all the old furniture had been relegated to the attic, to the great regret of Don Geronimo Vasquez, her father, who, though weak-willed, was a man of sense.

The ten-branched chandeliers, the four-burner lamps, the Russia leather arm-chairs, the damask hangings, the Persian carpets, the Chinese screens, the grand-

father's-clocks, the red velvet furniture, the marquetry cabinets, the darkened paintings by Orrente and Menendez, the huge bedsteads, the massive walnut tables, the dressers with quadruple doors, the wardrobes with sets of twelve drawers, and the huge flower-vases, all the old Spanish luxury, in a word, had had to make room for the third-rate modern elegance which delights simple-minded people that have fallen in love with civilising ideas, and which would be rejected by an English chambermaid.

Doña Feliciana was dressed in the fashion of two years before, and it goes without saying that her attire was in no respect Spanish, for she possessed in the highest degree that supreme detestation of whatever is picturesque and characteristic which marks a woman of fashion. Her gown, of a neutral shade, had a pattern of almost invisible sprigs of flowers; the stuff had been brought from England and smuggled through by the bold Gibraltar smugglers. The most pimple-faced and sour bourgeoise would have selected precisely such a dress for her own daughter. A cape trimmed with Valenciennes lace modestly concealed the timid charms which the opening of the bodice, rendered obligatory by fashion, might have left uncovered. A narrow shoe

set off a foot that did not belie its origin by its small size and its arched instep.

This was, indeed, the only mark of her nationality which Doña Feliciana had preserved; otherwise she might well have passed for a German girl or a French one from the Northern provinces. Her blue eyes, her fair hair, and her uniformly rosy complexion were utterly unlike the idea of a Spanish maid as conveyed in ballads and keepsakes. She never wore the mantilla, and had no stiletto stuck in her garter. She did not know the fandango and the cachucha, but she was an adept at quadrilles, rigadoons, and the two-step waltz. She never went to a bull-fight, for she considered it a "barbarous" pastime; on the other hand, she never failed to be present at the first performance of vaudevilles adapted from Scribe's, at the Teatro del Principe, or to attend the performances of the Italian singers at the Teatro del Circo. In the evening she was in the habit of driving on the Prado, wearing a bonnet that had come straight from Paris. Thus it is plain that Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios was in every respect a thoroughly well brought-up young lady.

This was just what Don Andrès kept saying to himself; only, he did not dare to express, even to himself,

the corollary of that opinion, — Perfectly well brought-up, but utterly dull.

It may be asked why Don Andrès was courting, with a view to marriage, a girl for whom he cared so little. Was it through love of lucre? Not at all, for Doña Feliciana's dowry, though it amounted to a pretty round sum, was not large enough to influence in the least Don Andrès de Salcedo, who was fully as rich as she. The match had been arranged by the parents of the young couple, who had raised no objections. Fortune, birth, age, close intimacy, friendship from childhood, were all combined; Andrès had got accustomed to looking upon Feliciana as his wife, and when he went to her house it seemed to him that he was going home. Now, when a man goes home there is nothing for him to do but to go out. In other respects Andrès considered Feliciana was endowed with all desirable qualities: she was pretty, slender, and fair; she spoke French and English and could make tea, though it is true that Don Andrès could not bear the abominable decoction. She could dance and, alas! play the piano, and she was rather good at water-colours. Unquestionably a man who wanted more must have been very hard to please.

"Oh! it is you, is it, Andrès?" said Feliciana, without turning round. She had recognised that it was her betrothed by the creaking of his shoes.

The fact that so well brought-up a young lady as Doña Feliciana called the young gentleman by his Christian name need excite no surprise, it being the custom to do so in Spain after people have become somewhat intimate; and the use of the first name does not, as with us, indicate any relations of a lover-like nature.

"You have come just in time; I was busy practising the duet we are to sing to-night at the Marchioness de Benavidès' tertullia."

"I am afraid I am rather hoarse," answered Andrès, endeavouring at the same time to cough in support of his statement; but the cough did not sound genuine, and Doña Feliciana, unmoved by his excuse, said rather cruelly: —

"It will not amount to much, and we ought to sing the duet through once more together to make sure that it will go well. Please take my seat at the piano and play the accompaniment."

The poor fellow cast a sorrowful glance at the clock; it was four o'clock. He could not keep back a sigh,

and let fall his hands despairingly upon the ivory keyboard.

When the duet had been sung without too many mistakes, Andrès again looked at the clock, on which Esmeralda was still busy teaching her goat, but his furtive glance was noticed by Feliciana.

"You appear to take a great interest in the time to-day," said she. "I observe that you cannot take your eyes off the clock."

"I am merely looking round in a vague sort of a way, for what care I about the time when I am with you?" returned he as he gallantly bent over Feliciana's hand and kissed it respectfully.

"I quite believe that on any other day of the week you are indifferent to the progress of the hours, but on a Monday it is quite another matter."

"Why should I be, light of my life? Does not time fly just as swiftly, especially when I am fortunate enough to be singing with you?"

"Monday is bull-fight day, and you may deny it or not, as you please, my dear Andrès, but just at this moment you would a great deal rather be at the Alcala Gate than in front of my piano. It seems to me that your love of that dreadful sport is quite incorrigible.

Once we are married, however, I shall take care that you become more civilised and more humane."

"I did not actually intend to go to the fight, yet, if you do not mind, I own that — I went yesterday to the Abrunigal Arroyo, and there were, among others, four Gaviria bulls, superb animals, with huge dewlaps, clean-limbed, and muscular, and with horns like crescents. They were so fierce and wild that they had wounded one of the tame bulls. What a splendid fight there will be presently in the ring, if only the toreros are brave and skilful!" cried Andrès, impetuously, carried away by his enthusiasm as an *aficionado*.

During the delivery of this tirade Feliciana had assumed a supremely disdainful air, and said to Don Andrès: —

"You will never be anything more than a barbarian varnished over; you will drive me crazy with your descriptions of wild beasts and your accounts of animals ripped up. And you talk about horrid things like those with an air of delight, as if there were nothing finer in the world."

Poor Andrès hung his head, for, like other Spaniards, he had read the stupid philanthropical tirades which cowards and nerveless souls have written against bull-

fights, that are one of the noblest sports it is given to man to behold, so that he fancied he must be something like a Roman of the Decadence, part butcher, part belluarium, part cannibal. All the same he would willingly have given every douro in his purse to the man who would have shown him how to get away decently and to reach the ring in time for the beginning of the fight.

"Well, my dear Andrès," said Feliciana with a half-ironical smile, "I do not pretend to be capable of rivalling those terrible Gaviria bulls, and I do not mean to deprive you of a pleasure you enjoy so much. Your body is here, but your heart is in the amphitheatre. Be off with you; I am merciful and set you at liberty, on condition that you shall come early to the Marchioness de Benavidès'."

Impelled by delicacy of feeling Andrès would not profit at once by the leave given him by Feliciana; he chatted for some time longer and went out lingeringly, as if delayed in spite of himself by the charm of the conversation. He walked slowly until he had turned the corner of the Calle Ancha de San Bernardo and into the Calle de la Luna. Then, sure he could not be seen from his betrothed's balcony, he started at a

pace that speedily brought him into the Calle de Desengaño.

A stranger would have noticed with surprise that everybody was going in the same direction; every one was going, no one was coming. This is a phenomenon that recurs every Monday, between four and five o'clock.

In a few moments Andrès had got up to the fountain that marks the intersection of the streets de San Luiz, Fuencarral, and Ortalezza. He was nearing his destination.

As soon as he had crossed the Calle del Caballero de Gracia, he entered into the splendid Calle d'Alcala, that grows broader as it draws nearer the city gates, just like a stream which as it approaches the sea grows with the affluents that fall into it. In spite of its vast width, this handsome street, that Paris and London might well envy, and the slope of which, bordered with dazzlingly white buildings, ends in a burst of sky, was crowded to the walls with a compact, multi-coloured, swarming, and ever denser crowd. Pedestrians, horsemen, carriages crossed, bumped, became tangled up amid a cloud of dust, joyous cries, and shouts. Sticks fell upon the backs of restive animals; bells, hung in

clusters upon the headstalls of mules, clanged deafeningly, while the two sacramental Spanish words were bandied to and fro from one group to another like shuttlecocks struck by battledores.

In the midst of this human sea appeared here and there, like cachalots, coaches of the days of Philip IV, their gilding faded, their colours washed out, dragged by four antediluvian steeds, or single-seated berlins, that had been very stylish in the days of Manuel Godoï, but now sank down upon their worn springs, and looked more disreputable than the old passenger vans of Paris, whose occupation was destroyed by the railways. On the other hand, as if to represent modern times, omnibuses drawn by six or eight mules, kept going at full speed by a fusilade of cracking whips, burst through the crowd, the people shoving back in fear against the polled and squat trees that border the Calle d'Alcala from the Fountain of Cybele to the triumphal gate erected in honour of Charles III.

Never did a post-chaise, even when the postilion received five-franc tips, — in the days when there was still posting, — fly at such a pace. This phenomenal speed is explained by the fact that Madrid omnibuses run two hours a week only: namely, during the hour

just before the bull-fight, and the hour immediately after. As a number of trips have to be made in a short time, the drivers are compelled to get all the pace they can out of their mules by means of whip-lashes, and it must be owned that the drivers' inclination is quite in accord with the necessity under which they labour.

Andrès walked on with the light, springing gait characteristic of the Spaniards, who are the best walkers in the world, and he jingled joyously in his pocket, among a few douros and small coins, his *sombra* ticket, entitling him to a seat on the shady side, close to the barrier; for, disdaining the more stylish boxes, he preferred to lean on the ropes which are supposed to prevent the bull from leaping in upon the spectators, — even though he thus risked rubbing elbows with a peasant in parti-coloured jacket or having a manolo blow his cigarette smoke into his hair, — because, in that particular place one can see every detail of the fight and appreciate at their real worth the strokes delivered.

Although he was engaged to be married, Don Andrès did not deny himself the pleasure of looking at the pretty faces more or less concealed by lace, velvet, or taffeta mantillas, and if a beauty went by, her fan

on her cheek, opened out by way of sunshade to keep the rough kisses of sunburn from the blooming pallor of her delicate complexion, Andrès would quicken his steps and, turning round without affectation, gazed his fill upon the features that had been hidden from him.

On this day Don Andrès was more careful than usual in his examination of the fair, allowing no possibly pretty face to pass him without studying it inquisitively; he seemed to be looking for some one in the crowd.

From a strict moral point of view a man who is engaged to be married ought not to be aware that there are any other women in the world than his novia; but outside of novels such scrupulous fidelity is rare indeed. So Don Andrès, though he was not descended from Don Juan Tenorio or Don Juan de Maraña, was drawn to the Plaza de Toros by something else than the mere attraction of the fine sword-thrusts of Luca Blanco and Montès' nephew.

On the preceding Monday he had caught sight, at the bull-fight, on the *tendido* benches, of a wondrously beautiful and strangely expressive young girl's face, the features of which had become imprinted on his memory

with astonishing clearness, considering how brief a glimpse he had had of them. It was a mere fortuitous chance, that ought not to have left behind it any more durable impression than that made by a picture glanced at in passing, since no word, no look had been exchanged by Andrès and the young manola, for the girl appeared to belong to that class, and they had been separated by quite a space. Besides, Andrès had no reason to think that the girl herself had noticed him and remarked his admiration of her; her eyes, fixed on the ring, had not moved once from the spectacle, in which she seemed to be wholly absorbed. It was therefore a mere incident, which he ought to have forgotten on the very spot where it had occurred; yet time and again the face of the young girl had recurred to Andrès' memory with undue vivacity and persistency.

In the evening, unconsciously, no doubt, he had continued his walk, usually confined to the Salón del Prado, where the fashionable world of Madrid lolls on chairs, beyond the Alcachofa Fountain, under the shady walks frequented by the manolas of the Plaza Lavapiès. He was led to break with his fashionable habits by a faint hope of meeting the unknown once more.

A further significant symptom was that he had noticed that Feliciana's hair, when seen in reflected light, had curious shades scarcely attenuated by the use of cosmetics — a thing he had never observed before — and that her eyes, bordered with pale lashes, were wholly devoid of expression, save that of the modest ennui of a well brought-up girl; and as he reflected on the coming sweets of marriage, he involuntarily yawned.

Just as Andrès was passing under one of the three arches of the Alcala Gate, a calesino was forcing its way through the crowd amid a concert of curses and hisses, that being the manner in which the Spaniards treat whatever disturbs them in the enjoyment of their pleasures and seems to infringe upon the supremacy of pedestrians. The calesino was a delightfully extravagant vehicle; the body, perched on two huge scarlet wheels, was covered with a wealth of Cupids and Anacreontic attributes, such as lyres, tambourines, pipes, hearts pierced with darts, kissing doves, all the work of a long since dead painter endowed with more audacity than skill.

The mule, clipped half-way down, jingled upon its ornamented head-gear a regular set of chiming, tinkling

bells. The saddler who had made the harness had indulged in a downright debauch of braiding and stitching, of pompons, tufts, and trifles of all colours. At a distance, but for the long ears that emerged from the gaudy mass, the mule's head, thus attired, might have been mistaken for a walking nosegay.

A fierce-looking calesero, in shirt-sleeves and an Astrakhan fur jacket on his shoulder, seated sideways on the shaft, was raining blows with the butt of his whip upon the bony quarters of the animal, that bent to its work and rushed on with renewed fury.

Now, there is nothing about a calesino at the Alcala Gate on a Monday that calls for a detailed description or that deserves to attract attention, and if this particular one has been thus honoured by a special account, it is because the moment Don Andrès caught sight of it, his face expressed the most delighted surprise.

It is not usual for a carriage to drive empty to the Plaza de Toros, and in this calesino were seated two persons. The first was a little old woman, stout, dressed in black, in old-time fashion. Her gown, an inch too short, allowed to be seen the lower hem of a yellow petticoat, such as is worn by Castilian peasants. The venerable creature was one of those women who,

in Spain, are called *tia Pelona* or *tia Blasia*, as their name may be, just as, in the world so well described by Paul de Kock, we say Mother Michael or Mother Godichon. Her big, flat-featured, wan face would have been uncommonly vulgar had not its commonplaceness been relieved by a certain fierce, grim look worthy of the duennas of the good old days, due to a pair of black eyes, broadly ringed with dark circles, and two slight mustaches that shadowed the corners of the lips. Goya, the inimitable author of the "Caprices," would have drawn the face with a couple of touches of his graver. Although the age of love had long since passed away, so far as she was concerned, her serge mantilla, edged with velvet, was nevertheless wrapped round her with a certain coquetry, while she fanned herself affectedly with a great green paper fan. But probably it was not the sight of this lovely being that caused Andrès' eyes to flash with satisfaction.

The other passenger was a young girl sixteen to eighteen years of age, nearer sixteen than eighteen. Her exquisite face, slightly olive under its pallor, was framed in by a light taffeta mantilla set upon the high back of a tortoise-shell comb, round which was wound a long tress of hair. Her foot, resting on the front of

the calesino, and almost Chinese in size, allowed to be seen a dainty satin shoe with satin quarters and the least bit of a well-fitting silk stocking with coloured clocking. One of her hands, slender and delicate, though somewhat sunburned, toyed with the ends of her mantilla, while on the other, that lay upon a cambric handkerchief, shone a few silver rings, the richest gems in her manola casket. On her sleeves flashed jet buttons that completed her thoroughly Spanish costume.

Andrès recognised the lovely face the remembrance of which had haunted him for a week. He quickened his steps and reached the entrance to the Plaza de Toros at the same time as the calesino. The calesero had knelt down on one knee to make a step for the handsome manola, who alighted, resting her hand lightly on his shoulder. The descent of the old lady was a more complicated business, but it also was happily managed, and the two women, followed by Andrès, ascended the wooden stairs leading to the benches.

Chance, with good taste and gallantry, had caused the tickets to the seats to be so distributed that Don Andrès found himself placed right by the side of the young manola.

II

WHILE the spectators were noisily crowding into the amphitheatre, and the great funnel-shaped space occupied by the benches was being darkened by an ever denser multitude, the toreros were coming up one after another by a back door into the place they use as a foyer, and where they await the hour for the beginning of the *funcion*.

It is a large whitewashed room, bare and ugly. The dull yellow flames of a few tapers flicker in front of a smoky image of Our Lady, hanging on the wall, for, like all men whose profession involves the risk of sudden death, toreros are devout, or at least superstitious. Every one of them owns an amulet in which he reposes the fullest confidence; they are dismayed by certain omens, inspired by others, and they claim to know beforehand when a fight is likely to result fatally for them. But a candle timeously dedicated and burned has the power of checking fate and turning away danger. On this particular day there must have been a round dozen candles lighted, a proof of the accuracy

of the remark made by Don Andrès concerning the strength and fierceness of the bulls he had seen in the Arroyo the night before, and the points of which he had described so enthusiastically to his betrothed Feliciana, who cared for none of these things.

Some twelve toreros, chulos, and banderillos turned up, wrapped in their glazed calico capes. Every one of them, as he passed in front of the Madonna, bowed his head more or less devoutly, and having performed this duty took from a table *la copa de fuego*, a small bowl, with wooden handle, filled with coals and placed there for the greater convenience of cigarette and cigar smokers, and then puffed away as they walked up and down or seated themselves on the wooden settles placed against the walls.

One only passed in front of the picture without paying it the token of respect, and sat down by himself, crossing his legs, which, in their shining silk stockings, looked like marble. Out of the opening of his cape issued his thumb and forefinger, yellow as gold, clasping a cigarette nearly smoked out. The fire was approaching the skin at a rate that would have scorched less delicate fingers, but the torero heeded it not, absorbed as he was in his thoughts.

He was a man twenty-five to twenty-eight years of age; his dark complexion, black eyes, and closely curling hair showed he was an Andalusian. He certainly must have come from Sevillê, the earth's dark eye, the home of stout, well-built, well-set-up fellows, twangers on the guitar, tamers of horses, fighters of bulls, experts with the navaja, with steel muscles and quick hands. It would have been hard to match his robust frame and well-made limbs. His strength was just great enough to avoid degenerating into heaviness; he was as well fitted to be a wrestler as a runner, and if one could suppose that nature ever intended to create men specially for the purpose of making toreros of them, it was plain that it had never been so successful as when it had turned out this Hercules with the limber frame.

Under the parted mantle flashed in the shadow the spangles on his flame-coloured and silver-braided jacket, and the stone of the *sortija* that fastened the ends of his cravat. The stone itself was quite a valuable one and, like the rest of the costume, proved that its owner belonged to the aristocracy of his profession. His *mono*, made of new ribbons, with which the lock of hair, reserved for this purpose, was tied, spread out on the

nape of his neck in a broad bow; his *montera*, of the finest black, was covered with trimmings of the same colour, and was fastened under his chin by brand-new cords; his extraordinarily small pumps would have done honour to the cleverest Parisian bootmaker, and might have served an Opera dancer for slippers.

Nevertheless Juancho, such was his name, had not the frank, open look that becomes a handsome, well-built young chap who will presently win the applause of the fair sex. Was it a dread of the coming encounter that disturbed his serenity? Yet the dangers run on the arena by the combatants, dangers that are not nearly as great as people are apt to fancy, ought not to have greatly troubled a fellow as athletic as was Juancho. Could he have seen in dreams an infernal bull bearing aloft on its red-hot steel horns a spitted matador? He had not, and none of these things troubled him. He was just what he had always been, especially during the past year. Without being exactly at variance with his comrades, there was not between him and them the careless and jovial devil-may-careness of people who run the same risks. He did not repel their advances, but he never made any himself, and Andalusian though he was, he preferred to hold his

tongue. At times, however, he seemed anxious to rid himself of his tendency to brooding; then he would give himself up to wild excess of reckless fun. He would drink beyond reason, though usually temperate; made rows in the drinking shops, danced the cachuca in the maddest way, and wound up with a causeless quarrel in which his knife speedily took its part. The fit over, he would fall back into taciturnity and moodiness.

Half a dozen conversations were going on among the various groups; the talk turned on love, politics, and especially on bull-fighting.

"What does your Grace think of the black Mazpula bull?" said one torero to another, with the fine ceremonious formulæ of the Spanish tongue. "Is it true that, as Arjona affirms, it is short-sighted?"

"It is short-sighted in the one eye, and long-sighted in the other. Don't trust it."

"And the Lizaso bull? the piebald one, you know. Which side does it gore on, think you?"

"I have no idea, for I have not seen it at work. What is your opinion, Juancho?"

"Gores from the right," answered the latter, as if roused from a dream, and not even glancing at the young fellow standing before him.

"What makes you think so?"

"It is constantly twitching its right ear, which is an almost infallible sign."

Having uttered these words, Juancho carried to his lips the end of his papelito, which vanished in a pinch of white ashes.

The hour fixed for the opening of the bull-fight was approaching; all the toreros, save Juancho, had risen; the talk was languishing, and the dull raps of lance-thrusts against the wall were heard from an inner court, in which the picadores were practising to get their hand in and to familiarise themselves with their mounts. Such of the men as had not finished their cigarettes threw them away; the chulos coquettishly settled on their fore-arms their brilliant-hued capes, and drew up in line. Silence reigned, for the moment when the arena is to be entered is always somewhat solemn and makes the lightest-hearted a bit thoughtful.

At last Juancho rose, threw off his cloak, which fell on the bench, took his sword and his muleta, and joined the particoloured group. The clouds had gone from his brow; his eyes flashed brightly and he breathed hard through his expanded nostrils, while a strange expression of audacity animated his noble features. He

drew himself up and threw out his chest as if preparing for the combat. His feet were planted firmly on the ground, and under the tissue of his silk stockings the muscles of his instep worked like the strings of a guitar. He was limbering up his muscles, making sure they were fit, just as a soldier works his blade in its scabbard as he marches into battle.

He was really a splendid fellow, was Juancho, and his dress brought out admirably his good looks. His small waist was bound round with a broad red silk *faja;* the silver embroidery that ran adown his jacket formed on the collar, the sleeves, the pockets, and the facings stagnant places, as it were, upon which the complex arabesques were multiplied to such an extent that the stuff disappeared under them. His jacket ceased to be a flame-coloured one embroidered with silver; it became a silver jacket embroidered with flame-coloured braid. Such a mass of bullion, balls, filigree-work, knots, and ornaments of every description shimmered and glanced upon his shoulders that his arms seemed to emerge from the orifice of a couple of crowns. His satin knee-breeches, trimmed with braiding and spangles down the seams, outlined, without confining them, his iron muscles and his elegantly ro-

bust limbs. His costume was the masterpiece of Zapata of Granada, — Zapata, the Cardillac of majo costumes, who weeps every time he brings you the coat you have ordered, and offers to buy it back for a larger price than he charged for making it. Connoisseurs considered it was worth ten thousand reals at the least, and it was worth twenty thousand when worn by Juancho.

The last blast of the trumpets had sounded; the arena was cleared of dogs and muchachos. The time had come. The picadores, pulling down over the right eye of their steeds the handkerchief that prevents their seeing the bull charging them, had joined the procession, and the company entered the arena in good order.

A murmur of admiration hailed Juancho when he came to bend the knee in front of the Queen's box; he did so with such grace, in so humble yet proud a manner, and rose so gracefully, that even the old aficionados said, "Neither Pepe Illo nor Romero, nay, not even José Candido, could have done better."

The mounted alguazil, in the black dress of a familiar of the Holy Inquisition, bore, according to custom, amid universal hooting, the key of the toril

to the man on duty, and having performed this formality, bolted as fast as he could, rocking in his saddle, losing his stirrups, clasping his horse round the neck, and affording to the crowd the sight of the comedy of terror, which is always so amusing to spectators who are themselves in safety.

Andrès, delighted at the way luck had served him, did not pay particular attention to the preliminaries of the fight, and the bull had already ripped up a horse before he even cast a glance at the arena. He was engaged in gazing at the girl by his side with an assiduity that would no doubt have annoyed her had she noticed it. She struck him as lovelier even than the first time he had seen her. The process of idealisation, which always acts upon remembrances, and often involves disappointment when one sees again the object of one's dreams, had in no wise added to the beauty of the unknown, and it must be owned that never had a more perfect type of Spanish girl sat down upon the blue granite benches of the Madrid arena.

The young fellow, plunged in ecstasy, was admiring the clear-cut profile, the delicate nose with its rosy nostrils like the inside of a shell, the full temples on which, under a faint amber hue, showed a network of

tenuous azure veins, the mouth blooming like a flower, savoury as a fruit, half parted by a smile, and illumined by pearly flashes, and especially the eyes whence the glance, concentrated by two thick fringes of black lashes, flashed with irresistible power.

The girl had all the purity of the Greek type, refined by Arab characteristics; she owned the same perfection, but with a fiercer accent; the same grace, but crueller. The ebon arch of the eyebrows was drawn so boldly upon the golden marble, the eyes themselves were of so vigorously sombre a black, the purple of the lips was so rich that such beauty as hers would have caused a certain consternation in a Paris or London drawing-room. Yet she was thoroughly in place at a bull-fight under the burning Spanish sky.

The old woman, who was not following the incidents in the arena with the same amount of attention as her young companion, was watching Andrès out of the corner of her eyes with the look of a mastiff that scents a burglar. When she was gay she looked hideous, but when she was surly she was repulsive. Her wrinkles seemed to be deeper, while the brown aureole that circled her eyes grew larger and recalled distantly the feathered circles around the eyes of owls,

her boar's tusk impinged harder upon her callous lip, and a nervous tic contracted her grimacing features.

As Andrès persisted in his contemplation of the girl, the old woman's wrath grew steadily. She moved restlessly on her seat, slammed her fan, kept nudging her fair companion and put all manner of questions to her to force her to turn her head in her direction; but, either because the girl did not understand her or did not wish to do so, she answered with a word or two and resumed her serious and attentive posture.

"The devil take the wretched old witch!" said Andrès to himself. "It is a pity the Inquisition has been done away with. With that face of hers she would have been made to ride backwards upon an ass, without trial, wearing a san-benito and a sulphur-steeped shift; for she plainly comes from the Barahona seminary, and surely washes maids for the sabbath."

Juancho, whose turn to kill had not yet come, was standing disdainfully in the centre of the arena, paying no more attention to the bulls than if they had been sheep. He scarcely moved aside a pace or two or twisted round to avoid one of the maddened animals which threatened to charge him when they noticed him. His fine black eyes were scanning the boxes,

galleries, and benches, on which fluttered, like the wings of innumerable butterflies, swarms of fans of every colour. He appeared to be trying to recognise some one among the spectators. When his glance, in its circlings, fell upon the bench where sat the young girl and the old woman, his sombre face lighted up with a flash of joy, and he nodded slightly, in the way actors on the stage sometimes indulge in.

"Militona," whispered the old woman, "Juancho has seen us, so mind what you are doing. That young fellow is making eyes at you, and Juancho is jealous."

"What do I care?" answered Militona, in a similar tone.

"You know he is the kind of man to take it out of any one who interferes with him."

"I have not looked at the gentleman, and besides I am my own mistress."

But Militona was fibbing when she said she had not looked at Andrès. She had not looked straight at him, it is true, women not needing to do so in order to see any one, but she could have described him most minutely. And as a truthful historian, I am compelled to say that she considered Don Andrès de Salcedo to be, as

a matter of fact he was, a very handsome young gentleman.

Andrès, in order to find an opening for conversation, signed to one of the dealers in oranges, candied fruit, pastilles and other sweets, who were passing up and down the passage, and who offer their wares at the end of a pole to such of the spectators as they believe to be sparking. Andrès' neighbour was so pretty that the dealer was standing near, reckoning upon a sure sale.

"May I offer you some of these pastilles, señorita?" said Andrès to his neighbour, with an engaging smile, at the same time proffering the open box.

The girl turned round quickly and looked at Andrès with surprise and anxiety.

"They are flavoured with lemon and peppermint," added Andrès, as if to help her to make up her mind.

Militona, suddenly doing so, dipped her slender fingers into the box and took a few pastilles.

"Lucky Juancho's back is turned," grumbled a man of the people who was sitting near, "else there would be blood spilt this evening."

"Will you not have some, Madam?" went on Andrès, in the most polite tone, as he handed the box to the hideous old hag, who was so utterly disconcerted

by the audacity of the act that she took all the pastilles that were left. Nevertheless, while emptying the box into her hand, black as a mummy's, she glanced furtively and timidly at the arena, then drew a deep sigh of relief.

Just at this moment the band played the death-call. It was Juancho's turn to kill. He proceeded to the ayuntamiento's box, bowed, and asked leave in conformity with the rule, then threw his montera in the air with the most fetching coolness. The usually noisy audience became suddenly still, and every one felt the oppression of expectation.

The bull Juancho had to slay was most formidable. I must be forgiven for not having told its exploits in detail, so taken up with Andrès and Militona have I been. It had stretched out seven horses, after ripping them up, and where they had fallen in their agony the lanky corpses showing out on the sand bore witness to its strength and fury. The two picadores had gone off sorely bruised and nearly maimed, while the *sobre-saliente* (understudy) was waiting in the passage, seated on his horse, and lance in rest, in readiness to take the place of his chiefs now unable to appear. The chulos remained prudently in the neighbourhood of the barrier, one foot

on the wooden rest by means of which they can vault over in case of danger, and the victorious bull was raging unchecked over the arena, stained here and there with great pools of blood on which the attendants dared not scatter dust, ramming the doors, and tossing the dead horses it came upon.

"Keep it up, my boy," said an aficionado of the lower classes, addressing himself to the angry brute. "Enjoy yourself while you may; skip round, jump about. You will not be quite so gay presently, for Juancho will quiet you."

And indeed Juancho was walking towards the monstrous brute with the firm, resolute mien that makes lions themselves retreat.

The bull, amazed to find it still had an adversary, stopped, bellowed, shook the slaver from its mouth, pawed the earth with its hoof, lowered its front two or three times and drew back a few steps.

Juancho was magnificent: his features expressed inflexible resolution; his eyes, with their fixed glance, the pupils surrounded with white looking like stars of jet, flashed invisible rays that riddled the bull like arrows of steel. Unconsciously he was subjecting it to the magnetism which enabled Van Amburgh, the

lion tamer, to drive trembling tigers cowering into the corners of their dens.

For every step the man took forward, the fierce brute took one backwards.

At the sight of this triumph of moral over brute force, the audience, carried away by enthusiasm, burst out into frantic applause, cries, and stamping of feet that were perfectly deafening. The amateurs clanged as hard as they could the bells and gongs they bring to fights for the purpose of making the most noise possible. The ceilings were cracking under the tumultuous admiration of the spectators in the galleries, and the paint, coming off in flakes, flew away in clouds of whitish pellicles.

The torero thus applauded, his eyes flashing, his heart swelling, looked up towards the place where was Militona, as if to lay at her feet the cheers shouted at him on all hands, and to present them to her as an homage. But the moment was ill chosen. Militona had let fall her fan, and Don Andrès, who had dashed down to pick it up, — with all the eagerness displayed in turning the smallest chances to account, for the purpose of strengthening by one thread more the frail link of a new acquaintanceship, — was handing it to

her with an air of great happiness and the most lover-like gesture imaginable.

The young girl could not but thank Andrès for his polite attention with a pretty smile and a graceful inclination of the head.

Juancho caught sight of the smile; his lips blanched, he turned green, his eyes became bloodshot, his hand contracted on the handle of the muleta, and with his sword, which he carried point down, he unconsciously dug holes in the sand.

The bull, no longer overawed by the man's fascinating glance, was drawing nearer its adversary without the latter remembering to be on his guard, and the space between the man and the brute was diminishing frightfully.

"The fellow is not easily scared," said some of the spectators, used to violent emotions.

"Take care, Juancho," said others, more humane. "Juancho of my life, Juancho of my heart, Juancho of my soul, the bull is almost upon you!"

As for Militona, whether the habit of witnessing bull-fights had hardened her feelings, or whether she trusted in Juancho's supreme skill, or again whether she felt but little interest in the man upon whom she

exerted such influence, her face remained calm and serene as though nothing were the matter. She merely flushed a little, and her bosom rose a little more quickly under the lace of her mantilla.

The cries of the spectators drew Juancho from his state of stupor. He threw himself back abruptly and waved the scarlet folds of his muleta before the bull's eyes.

The instinct of self-preservation and the gladiator's self-love struggled in Juancho's breast with the longing to see what Militona was doing. But a single look aside, a single second of forgetfulness might imperil his life at this supreme moment. It was an infernal situation. He was jealous, and saw by the side of the woman he loved an attractive and attentive young fellow, while he himself stood in the centre of the arena, the focus for the eyes of twelve thousand spectators, and the horns of a maddened brute within two inches of him, — a brute that must be slain in a certain place and in a certain way under pain of dishonour!

The torero, once more master of the *jurisdiction*, as it is called in tauromachy, settled himself firmly on his feet, and made several passes with the muleta to force the bull to look down.

"What could that young spark, that young beggar be saying to her that she was smiling so sweetly?" thought Juancho, forgetful that he was in presence of a redoubtable adversary; and involuntarily he looked up.

The bull, profiting by Juancho's absent-mindedness, charged him; Juancho, caught unawares, sprang back and with an almost mechanical motion struck out at hap-hazard. The steel penetrated some inches into the brute, but having struck the wrong place met the bone, and, shaken off by the enraged animal, flashed out of the wound with a jet of blood, to fall some distance away. Juancho was disarmed and the bull very much alive, for the false stroke had merely exasperated its fury. The chulos ran up, waving their red and blue capes.

Militona had paled a little, and the old woman was uttering exclamations and groaning like a stranded cachalot.

At the sight of the unaccountable lack of skill displayed by Juancho, the spectators broke out into a row such as Spaniards excel in. It was a perfect storm of insulting epithets, of howls and curses. "Fuera! fuera!" they cried on all hands. "Dog! Thief! Murderer! To the galleys with him! Send him to

Ceuta! To go and spoil such a fine bull! Maladroit butcher! Executioner!" In a word, all that Southern exuberance, which always goes to extremes, can suggest on such occasions.

Meanwhile Juancho remained standing under the storm of opprobrium, biting his lips and tearing with his free hand the lace on his ruffled shirt. His sleeve, ripped open by the bull's horn, showed a long purple scar down his arm. Once he staggered, and it looked as if he were about to fall a prey to his emotions, but he quickly pulled himself together, ran to his sword, as if he had made up his mind to do a particular thing, picked it up, pressed it with his foot to straighten out the bent blade, and placed himself so as to have his back to the spot where Militona was sitting.

At a sign from him, the chulos brought up the bull by fluttering their capes at it, and this time, free from all preoccupation, he struck the blow from above downwards, in accordance with rule, and in a way that the great Montès de Chiclana himself would have approved.

The sword, planted in the small of the neck, stood up with its cross hilt between the bull's horns, and recalled the mediæval pictures in which Saint Hubert is

seen kneeling before a stag bearing a crucifix between its antlers. The bull knelt heavily in front of Juancho, as if to do homage to his superiority, and after a brief convulsion rolled over with its four feet in the air.

"Juancho has brilliantly made up for his mistake! What a splendid stroke that was! I prefer him to Arjona and Chiclana. What is your opinion, señorita?" said Andrès enthusiastically to his fair neighbour.

"For God's sake, sir, do not speak another word to me!" returned Militona quickly, almost without moving her lips, and keeping her head turned away.

The words were spoken in so imperative and yet at the same time so suppliant a tone that Andrès saw at once they were widely different from the "Now, do stop!" of a girl who does not in the least want you to stop. It was not maidenly modesty that had made her speak thus; for Andrès' attempts at conversation had not been of a nature to merit such a rebuff; and then manolas, who are to Madrid what grisettes are to Paris, are not usually so terribly strait-laced.

Real terror, the dread of a danger which Andrès could not perceive, made itself felt in the short sentence, spoken sideways and which itself appeared to be perilous.

"Can she be a princess in disguise?" said Andrès to himself, very much puzzled and wondering what he had best do. "If I say nothing more, I shall look like a fool, or at least like an inferior sort of Don Juan. On the other hand, if I insist on talking to her, I may get the girl into an unpleasant scrape. I wonder if it is the duenna she is afraid of. It cannot be, since the dear creature devoured all my pastilles; she is a bit of an accomplice, therefore, and it is not of her that my Infanta is afraid. Could there be anywhere round here a brother of hers, or a jealous husband, or father?"

But among all the people in Militona's vicinity none could be counted as coming under any of these designations; they had commonplace features, and were all ordinary-looking. It was plain that they were in no way connected with the lovely manola.

As long as the fight lasted Juancho did not once look towards the tendido side, and despatched the two bulls he had to slay with unequalled skill, so that he was cheered as wildly as he had been hooted.

Andrès, whether he believed it prudent not to renew the conversation after the words the alarmed and supplicating tone of which had moved him, or whether he

could not think of a skilful way of renewing the talk, said not another word to Militona, and even rose a few minutes before the end of the fight.

As he stepped over the benches on his way out, he whispered a few directions to a bright-looking, alert lad, and then disappeared. The young rascal, as soon as the spectators started to leave, took care to walk in the crowd, without affectation and with the most indifferent air, behind Militona and the duenna. He allowed them to get into their calesino; then, as if yielding to a boyish impulse, when the carriage rolled away on its high scarlet wheels, he hung on to the body with feet and hands, shouting out the popular song of the Puerto bulls.

The calesino went off in a whirlwind of noise and dust.

"Good," said Andrès to himself, as from one of the walks in the Prado, for he had already got thus far, he watched the vehicle drive by at full speed, while the muchacho still hung on behind; "by this evening I shall know the address of that lovely girl — and may Bellini's duet rest lightly on my soul!"

III

THE lad was to report to Don Andrès, who was waiting for him, while smoking a cigar, in one of the walks on the Prado, close by the monument to the men who fell on May 2.

While puffing out the smoke that rose in blue spirals, Andrès was calling himself to account, and could not help confessing that he was, if not in love, at least deeply interested in the beautiful manola. Even had not the girl's loveliness sufficed to set on fire the least inflammable of hearts, the sort of mystery involved in the terror she had manifested when Andrès had spoken to her could not fail to rouse the curiosity of any young fellow at all adventurous. At twenty-five one need not be Don Quixote de la Mancha to be always ready to defend princesses one believes to be oppressed.

But in all this business where did Feliciana, the well brought-up young lady, come in? Andrès would have been puzzled to reply to that inquiry. He reflected, however, that he was not to be married to her before six

months, and concluded that this little love affair might easily be brought to a head, broken off, and forgotten before the fatal day came round, and that, besides, it was exceedingly easy to conceal an intrigue of this sort. It should be his last bit of wildness as a bachelor, for in the world it is called folly to love a graceful and charming girl, and wisdom to marry an ugly, surly, and unpleasant person. Once that was over, he would lead the life of a hermit, of a sage, of a regular martyr to marriage.

Having thus settled matters in his own mind, Andrès gave himself up to the most agreeable reveries. He was held down by Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios to a rule of propriety and decorous amusements that weighed greatly upon him, though he dared not protest against it. He had to conform to innumerable English habits, to drinking tea, to playing the piano, to wearing yellow kid gloves, white cravats, patent leather boots, without extenuating circumstances, to walking through dances, to talking of the latest fashions and of the great airs in Italian opera, all which things were singularly repugnant to his naturally bright and lively disposition. Whether he would or not, the old Spanish blood in his veins was rebelling against the invasion of Northern civilisation.

Believing himself already the fortunate lover of the young manola of the bull-ring — for what man is there who is not somewhat conceited, in the privacy of his thoughts at least? — he could see himself in the girl's little room, his coat off, enjoying a collation of pastry, oranges, and candied fruits, washed down with more or less genuine Peralta and Pedro Ximenès wines fetched by the tia from the nearest shop dealing in good liquor. The lovely girl, taking a *papel de hilo* stained with liquorice juice, rolled up in the thin tissue a few shreds of tobacco cut from a trabuco, and presented him with a cigarette made in the most perfect manner.

Then, pushing back the table with her foot, she took down a guitar from the wall, handed it to her lover, and slipping on a pair of pomegranate-wood castanets, which she fastened to her thumbs, drawing tight the band that holds them with her pearly teeth, she started to dance, with a litheness and an expression truly wonderful, some one of the old Spanish dances in which Arabia has left its ardent languor and its mysterious passion, the while she breathed with panting voice an old couplet of a seguidilla at once incoherent and quaint, but filled with penetrating poetry.

While Andrès was losing himself so completely in his voluptuous imaginations that he was marking the time of the castanets by cracking his fingers, the sun was rapidly sinking and the shadows were growing longer. The dinner hour was approaching, — for nowadays in Madrid the best society sits down to table at the same hour as people do in Paris and London, — yet his messenger had not returned. Even though the girl lived at the other end of the city, at the San Joachim or the San Jerónimo Gate, the young rascal had had time and more than time to go there and back twice over, especially in view of the fact that he had been able to perform the first part of the journey upon the back of the carriage.

The delay surprised and greatly annoyed Andrès, who did not know where to look for his emissary and thus saw an adventure that had promised so well stopped at the very outset. For where could he find a clue, considering that he had not the least indication to guide him, not a point, not a name even, and that he must trust to the chapter of luck, notoriously unreliable?

"Something may have happened that I cannot guess. Let me wait a few minutes longer," said he to himself.

Profiting by the gift of ubiquity accorded to every story-teller, I shall follow the calesino on its rapid way. At first it had driven by the Prado, then had turned down the Calle de San Juan, Andrès' emissary still hanging on with feet and hands to the back springs; next it had entered the Calle de los Desemparados, but when about half-way down the street, the driver, noticing that he was carrying extra weight, had let fly at poor Perico so skilful a cut of the whip that he had slashed him across the face, and compelled him to let go his hold.

When the boy had rubbed his eyes filled with tears of pain, and had recovered his powers of sight, the calesino was already at the end of the Calle de la Fé, and the rumble of its wheels over the pavement was growing fainter. Perico, who, like all Spaniards, was a capital runner, and was filled with a sense of the importance of his mission, started at his best pace after it, and would unquestionably have caught up the vehicle if it had kept on a straight course. But at the end of the street it turned round a corner and Perico lost sight of it for a minute. When he got to the corner in his turn, the calesino had vanished. It had entered the net-work of streets and lanes in the neigh-

bourhood of the Plaza de Lavapiès. The boy could not tell whether it had gone down the Calle del Povar, de Santa Inès, de las Damas, or de San Lorenzo. He went through each of them in turn, in hopes of seeing the calesino in front of a door in one of them, but his expectation was doomed to disappointment. All he saw was the vehicle returning empty, and the driver cracking his whip, as if in ironical threatening, and hastening back for another fare.

Vexed at having been unable to accomplish what Andrès had charged him to do, Perico tramped for a time through the streets where he fancied the calesino might have deposited its passengers, concluding, with the precocious understanding of love that marks Southern children, that so pretty a girl could not fail to have a lover; that consequently she would be at the window to watch for his coming, or that she would be going out to meet him if he did not turn up, — the Day of Bulls being devoted, in Madrid, to walks, parties of pleasure, and enjoyment. His reasoning was sound enough, and there were indeed many pretty faces smiling out of the windows and bending over the balconies, but not one of them was that of the manola he had been set to follow. Tired out at last, he washed his

eyes in the Lavapiès fountain, and started for the Prado to report to Don Andrès. While he could not tell him the exact address, he had at least made nearly sure that the fair dwelt in one of the four streets I have named, and as they are all three very short, it would be easier to discover her than by seeking her out in the whole of Madrid.

Had Perico remained a few minutes longer, he would have seen a second calesino stop in front of a house in the Calle del Povar, and a man, with his hat pulled well down over his face and his cloak well up round it, spring lightly from the carriage and enter the passage. As he leapt down, the cape opened and a glitter of spangles, and a well turned leg, clothed in silk stockings spotted with blood, became visible.

The reader has recognised Juancho, for it was he. But Perico had no idea of any connection between Juancho and Militona, so that the sight of him would not have afforded the lad a clue to the home of the girl. Besides, Juancho might be returning to his own dwelling, as indeed was most likely, since, after so exciting an experience as he had had, he must have felt the need of rest and of putting compresses upon the scar on his arm, the horns of a bull being

poisonous and the wounds inflicted by them slow to heal.

Perico hastened back to the Obelisk of May 2, where Andrès had appointed to meet him, but experienced another disappointment. Andrès was not alone. Doña Feliciana, who had gone out to make a purchase with a friend, whom she was driving home, had caught sight of her lover walking about with feverish impatience. She and her friend had got down from the carriage, and approaching Andrès she had asked him if it was for the purpose of composing a sonnet or a madrigal that he was wandering about under the trees at a time when less poetical mortals were devoting themselves to the comforting of the inner man. The unfortunate Andrès, caught in the very act of entering upon an intrigue, could not keep back a blush, and stammered a few commonplace compliments; but though he smiled outwardly, inwardly he was raging. Perico, not sure of what he had best do, kept circling in a hesitating way round the trio; young though he was, he understood it would not do to give a gentleman a manola's address in the presence of a lady so beautifully dressed in French fashion. But he could not help wondering why a gentleman who was acquainted

with such fine bonnet-wearing ladies should be interested in a manola.

"What is the matter with that boy? He keeps looking at us with his big black eyes as if he wanted to eat us up."

"I suppose he is waiting to get the end of my cigar," replied Andrès, as he threw the stump and made a quiet sign that meant, "Come back when I am rid of these people."

The boy drew off, and pulling a flint and steel from his pocket, lighted the cigar and puffed away at it like a true smoker.

But Andrès was not yet out of the wood. Feliciana struck her forehead with her gloved hand, and said, as if suddenly recollecting something: "Goodness me! I was so taken up with our Bellini duet when you were at the house that I forgot to tell you that Don Geronimo, my father, expects you at dinner. He meant to write you this morning, but as I was to see you this afternoon, I told him it was not worth his while doing so. It is pretty late now," she went on, looking at a little watch the size of a thumb-nail. "You had better get into the carriage; we can drive Rosa home and then go back to the house together."

Let no one be surprised that this well brought-up young lady should propose to a young gentleman to drive with her, for on the back seat of the carriage sat an English governess, stiff as a poker, red as a lobster, straight and stark in the longest of corsets, and whose mere appearance would put to fright love and gossip.

There was no getting out of it; so after having assisted Feliciana and her friend to get in, he sat down by Miss Sarah's side, irritated at having been unable to hear Perico's report, believing the lad to know more than he actually did, and with the prospect of an indefinitely prolonged musical evening.

I fancy the description of the dinner would not prove particularly interesting to my readers, so I shall start in search of Militona, trusting to be more fortunate than Perico.

Militona did, as a matter of fact, live in one of the streets settled upon as her place of abode by Andrès' young spy. It would be difficult to assign the house in which she dwelt, as well as many others, to any particular order of architecture, save, perhaps, the composite. The placing of the windows, no two of which were alike, had been the work of fancy. The builder appeared to have aimed at the inversion of symmetry,

for no one part on the higgledy-piggledy façade corresponded to any other: the walls, almost all out of plumb, bellied out and seemed to be settling down under their own weight; they were with difficulty upheld by iron clamps and rods in the form of S's and crosses, and but for the rather more solid houses on either side, against which it leaned, it would infallibly have crashed into the street. On the lower part, the plaster, broken away, allowed the mud walls to show; the upper part, in a better state of preservation, had retained traces of the former pink wash, that looked like the blushes of the poor building ashamed of its wretchedness.

Near a roof of tumbling tiles, its brown crest, broken here and there, showing against the blue sky, smiled a little window the framework of which had been recently whitewashed. On the right hand side a cage held a quail, and on the left, another and exceedingly small one, adorned with beads of red and yellow glass, formed a palace and a prison for a cricket; for the Spaniards, who acquired from the Arabs the love of persistent rhythms, are very fond of the monotonous, regularly cadenced song of the quail and the cricket. A porous earthenware jar, hung by a string fastened to

the handles, and covered with pearly dew, was cooling the water in the rising evening breeze, and let fall a few drops upon a couple of pots of sweet-basil placed under it. The window was that of Militona's room, and from the street any one would have guessed that the nest was inhabited by a young bird, for youth and loveliness tell even on inanimate things and stamp them with their own character.

If my reader is not afraid to follow me up the begrimed stairs with their shiny wall, we may follow Militona who is springing up the steps with the elasticity of a pair of eighteen-year-old legs. She is already bathed in the light of the upper stories, while tia Aldonza, still involved in the darksome limbo of the lower stair, is groaning like Saint Joseph and hanging desperately with both hands to the slippery rope.

The handsome girl, lifting the piece of matting laid in front of the door with many panels, of the kind so common in Madrid, picked up her key and opened. Her poor little room could scarcely tempt thieves, and did not require that the door should be very carefully bolted, so when she went out Militona was in the habit of leaving it open. When she was at home, on the other hand, she bolted it carefully, for there then was in the

humble abode a treasure that drew not robbers, but lovers.

The walls had, for hangings and paper, a mere coat of whitewash; a mirror with much scratched silvering reflected most imperfectly the lovely face that consulted it; a plaster statuette of Saint Anthony, flanked by a couple of blue vases containing artificial flowers, a deal table, two chairs, and a little bed covered with a muslin counterpane, with vandyked valance, formed the whole of the furniture. I must not omit a few pictures of Our Lady and of Saints, painted and gilded on glass with Byzantine or Russian simplicity, a picture of the "Fight on the Second of May," the "Funeral of Daoiz and Velarde," a "Picador on horseback," after Goya, and a tambourine forming a pendant for a guitar. In accordance with the mingling of the sacred and the profane, which does not startle the ardent faith of really Catholic countries, there rose between the two instruments of joy and pleasure a tall curly palm-branch, brought back from church on Palm-Sunday.

Such was Militona's room, and although it contained no more than what was necessary, it had not the bare, cold look of poverty. It was illumined by a bright sunbeam; the vivid red of the bricked flooring was

pleasant to the eye; no ugly shadow could cling with bat-wings in the dazzlingly white corners; no spider spun its web between the joists of the ceiling; everything was bright, smiling, and gay in the little room with its four walls. In England it would have been the abode of deepest wretchedness; in Spain, it was almost comfort, and more of it than was needed to be happier than in Paradise itself.

The old woman had at last managed to climb to the top of the stairs. She entered the charming nook and sank down on one of the two chairs, which creaked in alarming fashion under her weight.

"Please, Militona," said she, "take down the jar and let me have a drink. I am choking and dying with thirst; the dust in that place and those abominable peppermint drops have set my throat in a flame."

"You should not have eaten them in handfuls, tia," smilingly replied the girl as she put the jar to the old woman's lips.

Aldonza drank two or three mouthfuls, wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, and rapidly fanned herself without a word.

"Talking of pastilles," she said presently, with a sigh, "how angrily Juancho was looking at us. I am

sure he missed the bull because that good-looking gentleman was talking to you; he is as jealous as a tiger, is Juancho, and if he managed to find him, I warrant you he made him sorry. I would not give much for the young chap's skin, for it runs the risk of being slit up with mighty fine slashing. Do you remember what a fine slice he took out of that Luca who wanted to present you with a nosegay at the Romeria de San Isidoro?"

"I hope Juancho will not go to such unpleasant lengths. I begged that young gentleman not to speak to me again, so firmly and so beseechingly that he never spoke another word. He understood I was frightened and took pity on me. But it is abominable to be pursued by such tyrannical and ferocious love."

"It 's your own fault," replied the old woman. "You should not be so pretty."

A sharp rap at the door, like one struck by an iron hand, interrupted the conversation of the two women. The older rose and peeped through the little grated wicket, closed with a panel, cut breast-high in the door, according to Spanish custom. In the opening showed Juancho's face, pale under the bronzed tint it had acquired under the hot sun of the arena.

Aldonza opened the door and Juancho entered. His face bore traces of the violent emotion he had felt in the arena: it betokened concentrated rage, for, with his vulgar idea of honour, applause did not compensate for hisses. He considered he was dishonoured and obliged to perform the rashest deeds in order to regain the good opinion of the public and his own.

What mainly maddened him, however, and caused his rage to be so intense, was that he had been unable to leave the ring soon enough to catch up the young fellow who had seemed so attentive to Militona, and that he did not know where to look for him now. He felt sure the man had followed her and spoken to her again, and as the thought came into his mind, his hand mechanically sought the knife in his belt.

He sat down on the one other chair. Militona, leaning against the window-sill, was biting at the capsule of a red carnation stripped of its petals; the old woman was fanning by way of trying to look unconcerned. None of the three spoke until Aldonza broke the silence.

"Does your arm pain you much still, Juancho?" said she.

"No," replied the torero, fixing an inquisitive glance upon Militona.

"You ought to put salt and water compresses upon it," went on the old woman, endeavouring to keep up the conversation.

But Juancho answered her not, and as if haunted by the one thought, turned on Militona.

"Who was the young fellow sitting next you at the bull-fight?"

"I do not know; that was the first time I had seen him."

"You would like to know him, though?"

"You are rude; but suppose that were the case?"

"If it were the case, I should kill that handsome coxcomb in patent-leather boots, white kids, and frock coat."

"Juancho, you talk like a madman. I have never given you the right to be jealous of me. You say you love me, but that is no fault of mine, and I see no reason why, because you think me pretty, I should take to adoring you."

"She is quite right; she is not bound to do so," said the old woman. "Yet the pair of you would make a handsome couple. No daintier hand would

ever have rested upon a stronger arm, and if you were to dance the cachuca in Las Delicias gardens, people would stand on their chairs to see you."

"Have I ever coquetted with you, Juancho? Have I ever tried to attract you by glances, smiles, or witching ways?"

"No," answered the torero in a hollow voice.

"I have never promised you anything and have never given you any reason to hope. I have always told you to forget me. Why, then, do you torment and offend me with your unjustifiable brutality? Because I have taken your fancy, must my every glance be a sentence of death? Are you to drive every one from me? You crippled that poor Luca, a dear fellow who entertained and amused me, and you seriously wounded your friend Ginès, because he had touched my hand. Do you suppose that you help on your cause by such doings? To-day you behaved absurdly in the ring; while you were engaged in spying upon me you allowed the bull to come upon you, and you struck a vile stroke."

"It is because I love you, Militona, with all the strength of my soul, with all the fire of the blood that burns in my veins. It is because I can see no one in

the world but you, and if a bull were to gore me while you are smiling upon another man, I should not look round. I am not gentle-mannered, it is true, for my youth was spent in fighting wild brutes; every day I have to kill and run the risk of being killed. I cannot be soft like those youngsters, delicate and slender as women, who waste their time having their hair curled and reading the papers. One thing is sure: if you are not mine, you shall never belong to any other man!" went on Juancho, after a pause, as he smote the table with his fist, and, having, as it were, summed up his case in the blow.

Then he rose abruptly, and went out grumbling: —

"I 'll manage to find him and stick six inches of cold steel into him!"

And now let me return to Andrès, who, sitting piteously in front of the piano, is performing his part in the Bellini duet with a wealth of false notes that is driving Feliciana to despair. Never had a party in an aristocratic house filled him with greater weariness, and he was inwardly consigning the Marchioness de Benavidès and her tertulia to the devil. The delicate, pure profile of the young manola, her jet black hair, her Arab eyes, her wild grace, her picturesque cos-

tume caused him to take little pleasure in the contemplation of the turbaned dowagers who thronged the Marchioness' drawing-room. He came to the conclusion that his betrothed was unquestionably ugly, and left the place very much in love with Militona.

As he was going down the Calle d'Alcala on his way home, he felt some one tugging at the tails of his coat. It was Perico, who, having made additional discoveries, was anxious to give an account of his mission and, it may be, to receive the douro he had been promised.

"If you please, sir," said the boy, "she lives in the Calle del Povar, in the third house on the right. I saw her just now at her window taking down the water-cooler."

IV

IT is all very well to know where is my love's nest," said Don Andrès to himself on waking after a night's sleep in which Militona's graceful form had more than once appeared to him. "The question is how can I reach her? How am I to manage that? I do not see very well what I can do save prowl up and down in front of her house, and study the ways of the place. But if I go down into that neighbourhood in my usual dress, that is, rigged out like the latest Paris fashion-plate, I shall attract attention, and be unable to carry out my reconnoitring properly. She is bound to come out or go in some time or other, for I do not suppose she has six months' supply of sweets and nuts in her room. Then I shall accost her as she passes with a neatly turned compliment, and ascertain if she is as stand-offish in conversation as she proved to be at the bull-fight. Let me go to the Rastro to buy wherewithal to transform myself from a fashionable fellow into a manolo; once disguised in this way, I shall not excite the suspicion of any jealous

lover or ugly-tempered brother, and I shall be able to learn much about my beauty without awakening doubts as to my real character."

Having thus settled upon his plan of action, Andrès rose, swallowed quickly a cup of chocolate, and proceeded to the Rastro, which is to Madrid what the Temple is to Paris, a place where anything may be bought, save what is new. He felt elated and happy; not for a moment had it occurred to him that the girl might not love him or might be in love with some one else; he was endowed with a trustfulness that rarely deceives one, for it is, as it were, the divination of sympathy, and the old Spanish love of adventure was awaking in him. He enjoyed the idea of disguising himself, and although the Infanta to be won was but a manola, he counted on enjoying walking about under her window in his dun-coloured cloak, while the danger indicated by the terror the girl had exhibited took from the undertaking any touch of commonplaceness.

While turning over in his mind innumerable stratagems of the kind that run counter to one another and are never of any use when the time comes, Andrès reached the Rastro.

It is a queer place, that Rastro. Imagine a steep

plateau, a sort of mound surrounded by mean and unhealthy houses in which all manner of suspicious businesses are carried on. On the plateau and in the adjacent streets are to be found second-hand shops of the lowest class, dealers in cast-off clothing, in junk, in old rags, broken bottles, in everything that is ancient, filthy, ragged, of no further use. Yet stains and holes, unrecognisable fragments of things, earthenware chips from the street corners, nails fished out of the gutter find purchasers in this place. It is an odd medley, in which tatters of all sorts meet in strangely philosophical fashion: an old court uniform, with the lace stripped off, rubs elbows with a peasant's jacket, with its facings of many colours; the ballet-dancer's skirt with its tarnished spangles hangs by the side of a rusty and patched cassock; picadors' stirrups are mixed up with artificial flowers, odd volumes, blackened and yellowed paintings, and portraits that interest nobody. Rabelais and Balzac would find material there for a four-page description.

But if one goes up towards the square, there are a few shops of a better class in which may be found suits of clothes which, though no longer new, are still clean and may be worn by others than subjects of the

picaresque realm. It was into one of these that Andrès made his way.

He selected a fairly new manolo costume which, when fresh from the tailor's, must have enabled its owner to make many a conquest in the Calle San Luis, the Calle del Barquillo, and the Plaza Santa Ana. It consisted of a hat with truncated crown, the brim turned up like a turban and trimmed with velvet, a round jacket the shade of Spanish tobacco, with small buttons, wide trousers, a broad silk sash, and a dark-coloured cloak. The whole costume had been worn just long enough to lose its first gloss, but did not lack for elegance.

Andrès, having looked at himself in a tall bevelled Venetian mirror in a magnificent frame, though it would have been hard to say how it had got there, was satisfied with his appearance, and indeed the dress set off his handsome, well-set-up figure in a way to win every tender heart in Lavapiès.

He paid for the clothes and had them put aside, telling the dealer that he would return in the evening to put them on in his shop, for he did not wish to be seen leaving his own house in disguise.

On his way back, he passed through the Calle del Povar, and at once recognised the white-framed win-

dow and the hanging jar of which Perico had told him. There was, however, no sign of any one being in the room, a carefully drawn muslin curtain making the panes opaque from the exterior.

"No doubt she has gone out to attend to some work, and will return at the end of the day only, for she must be a seamstress, a cigar-maker, an embroiderer, or something of the sort," said Andrès, as he went on.

But Militona had not gone out; she was bending over her table and putting together the parts of a bodice outspread before her. Although she was not engaged in any mysterious occupation, she had shot the bolt of her door, no doubt fearing an undesired call from Juancho, a call that would have been more dangerous for her in view of the old woman's absence.

While she worked she thought of the young fellow who had looked at her the day before, at the bull-fight, with such warm and soft glances, and who had whispered words in a voice that still sounded sweetly in her ears.

"I do hope he will not try to see me again, though I should be glad if he did. But Juancho would pick some dreadful quarrel with him, and kill him, perhaps, or at least wound him greviously, as he has every man

who has sought my favour. Even if I could get rid of that tyrannical Juancho, — which is not likely, seeing he followed me from Granada to Seville, and from Seville to Madrid, and would pursue me to the ends of the world in order to prevent my bestowing on any one else the love I will not give him — even then, what would it avail me? That young gentleman belongs to a higher station in life than I do; it is plain from his dress that he is both noble and rich. His fancy for me is probably but a passing one, and I dare say he has already forgotten me."

I am bound to say that at this point the girl's brow clouded slightly and that a long breath, uncommonly like a sigh, swelled her surcharged bosom.

"He surely has a mistress, or is engaged to a young, beautiful, fashionable girl, who owns fine bonnets and costly shawls. How well he would look in a jacket embroidered in coloured silks, with silver filigree buttons, Ronda stitched boots, and a small Andalusian hat! And how neat his figure would be if he wore a handsome Gibraltar silk sash!" said Militona, continuing her monologue, in the course of which, led on by her innocent heart, she dressed Andrès in a costume that brought him nearer to her.

She had got so far in her castle-building when Aldonza, who lived in the same house, knocked at the door.

"Did you know, my dear," said she to Militona, "that that mad Juancho, instead of going to have his arm dressed, spent the whole night walking up and down under your window, no doubt in order to ascertain if the young fellow we saw at the bull-fight happened to be roaming round? He made sure you had appointed a meeting with him, and a pretty mess it would have been if you had! Why cannot you love poor Juancho? He would leave you alone then."

"Please do not talk so; I am not responsible for a love I have not in any way provoked."

"Of course the young gentleman of the Plaza de Toros," continued the old woman, "is very handsome too, and very gallant. He offered me the box of pastilles most gracefully and with all the respect due to my sex, but I am interested in Juancho, and I fear him like the devil. He considers me in the light of your chaperon, and would be quite capable of holding me responsible if you preferred any one to him. He keeps such a close watch upon you that it would be very difficult to conceal anything from him."

"From the way you talk one would really think I was already on the most intimate terms with the gentleman, though I can scarcely remember what he looks like," returned Militona, with a blush.

"If you do not remember him, I can tell you he remembers you. He could draw your portrait from memory, for he never took his eyes off you the whole time the fight lasted. He looked just as if he were in ecstasy in front of a Madonna."

As she listened to these proofs of Andrès' love, Militona bent silently over her work, and a sense of happiness hitherto unknown to her filled her heart.

Juancho, for his part, was far from entertaining such gentle sentiments. Shut up in his room, decorated with swords and the colours of bulls that he had snatched off at the peril of his life in order to present them to Militona, who had declined them, he was indulging in the self-worry customary to rejected lovers. He could not understand why Militona should not love him; her aversion for him was a problem he could not solve, and the answer to which he sought for in vain. Was he not young, handsome, strong, full of fire and courage? Had not the fairest hands in Spain applauded him time and again? Were not

his costumes as richly embroidered with gold and trimmed with as many ornaments as those of the most stylish toreros? Was not his portrait sold everywhere, lithographed, printed on silk handkerchiefs, with an aureole of laudatory couplets, like the portraits of the masters of the art? Except Montès himself, who was there that struck the death-stroke more skilfully or made the bull kneel so quickly? There was absolutely no one. Gold, the price of his blood, flowed through his hands like quicksilver. What did he lack, then? And in all simplicity he tried to discover a defect in himself and found it not. The only way he could account for Militona's antipathy, or at all events her coldness, was by supposing that she loved some one else, and he pursued that some one else everywhere; the slightest cause excited his rage and jealousy, yet he, who could compel wild animals to give way before him, fought in vain the girl's icy resolve. More than once had he thought of breaking the spell by killing her. This madness of his had lasted now for more than a year, that is, since the day he had seen Militona, for his love, like all violent passions, had at once reached its fullest development; immensity cannot grow more immense.

With a view to getting at Andrès, he had come to the conclusion that he must frequent the Salón del Prado, the del Circo and Principe theatres, the fashionable cafés, and other resorts of society people. And although he professed to despise modern dress and usually wore the majo costume, there lay on a chair near him a frock-coat, black trousers and a hat, which he had bought that morning under the arcades of the Calle Mayor, at the very moment when Andrès was making his purchase in the Rastro. The one, in order to satisfy his hatred, the other with the object of serving his love, had resorted to identical means.

Feliciana, whom Andrès, punctual as a guilty lover, did not fail to call upon at his usual hour, reproached him bitterly for the false notes and the innumerable proofs of forgetfulness he had indulged in the night before at the Marchioness de Benavidès'. There was not much use in practising a duet so carefully, of singing it day after day, if they were to make a mess of it on the great evening.

Andrès excused himself as well as he could; he averred that his own mistakes had brought out all the more strongly Feliciana's self-possessed talent; that she had never been in better voice, and that she had

sung in a way to make Bonconi, at the Teatro del Circo, jealous. He had no great difficulty in winning her round, and they parted very good friends.

Evening had come, and Juancho, dressed in his modern clothes, in which no one would have recognised him, was striding feverishly up and down the walks on the Prado, staring hard at every man he met, coming, going, and trying to be everywhere at once. He went into every theatre, searched with his eagle glance every box and all the orchestra-stalls and stage-boxes; he swallowed all manner of ices in the cafés, mingled with every group of politicians or poets engaged in discussing the new play, but failed to discover any one who looked like the young gentleman who had been talking with Militona on the day of the bull-fight; this for the very good reason that Andrès, who had gone to the dealer's shop to put on his costume, was at that very moment quietly taking a glass of iced lemonade in an *horchateria de chufas* (barley-water shop), situated almost opposite Militona's house, and which he had made his headquarters, with Perico for a scout. For the matter of that, Juancho would have passed him by without looking at him, for it would never have occurred to him that his rival might be wearing the

manolo's round jacket and sombrero de calaña. But Militona, concealed behind the corner of her window, had not been deceived for a minute; love, it is true, is more clear-sighted than hate. She was a prey to the liveliest anxiety; she asked herself what was the object of the young fellow in settling in that shop, and dreaded the terrible scene that could not fail to occur when he and Juancho met.

Andrès, his elbow resting on the table, was examining, with as much care as a spy on the track of a plot, every one who went into the house. There were women, men, and children, and people of every age in life, at first in great numbers, for the house contained many families, then at longer intervals. Little by little night had fallen and only a few late birds were due, yet Militona had not appeared.

Andrès was beginning to question the accuracy of the report made to him by his emissary, when the dark window was lighted up and showed that the room was inhabited. This made him certain that Militona was in her chamber, though he was no better off on that account. He wrote a few words on a piece of paper, and calling Perico, who was near, ordered him to carry the note to the beautiful manola.

Perico, slipping in behind one of the tenants who was just going in, made his way up the dark stairs, and by groping along the walls managed to reach the topmost landing. The light that filtered between the cracks enabled him to discover the door that must be Militona's; he knocked twice in discreet fashion; the girl half-opened the wicket, took the letter, and closed the little shutter.

"I hope she can read," said Andrès to himself as he finished his iced drink and paid the Valencian master of the horchateria.

He rose and walked slowly under the window. The letter he had sent up was as follows: —

"A man who cannot forget you, and who would not if he could, would like to meet you again. But the few words you spoke to him at the bull-fight, and the fact that he does not know your circumstances, make him fear to cause you trouble if he should try to do so. If he alone were in peril that would not stop him. Put out your light and throw the answer from the window."

A few minutes later the lamp went out, the window was opened, and Militona, as she took down her jar, caused one of the pots of sweet-basil to fall, crashing to the ground not far from Don Andrès.

In the brown loam scattered over the pavement gleamed something white; it was Militona's answer.

Andrès called a *sereno* (watchman) who was passing with a lantern at the end of his pike, and begged him to lower the light, by means of which he read the following words, written in a large, trembling, broken hand:—

"Go away . . . I have no time to write more. To-morrow, at ten o'clock, I shall be in the church of San Isidoro. But, I beg you go; your life is at stake."

"Thank you, my good fellow," said Andrès, putting a real in the sereno's hand; "you may go on your way."

The street was now quite deserted, and Andrès was slowly walking away, when the sight of a man wrapped in a cloak under which the handle of a guitar made a sharp projection, awakened his curiosity and caused him to conceal himself in a dark corner.

The man threw the end of his cloak over his shoulder, brought his guitar in front, and began to bring from it the rhythmic strumming that serves for base and accompaniment to the airs of seguidillas and serenades.

It was plain that the noisy prelude was intended to

awaken the fair in whose honour the racket was being produced, and as Militona's window remained closed, the man, forced to be content with an invisible auditor, — notwithstanding the Spanish saying that no woman is ever so sound asleep but that the strumming of a guitar will bring her to her window, — began, after uttering a sonorous "Hum! hum!" to sing the following stanzas in a strong Andalusian accent: —

"Child with airs imperial,
Dove with falcon's eyes for me
Whom thou hatest, — come I shall
Underneath thy balcony!

"There, my foot upon the stone,
I shall twang my chords with grace,
Till thy window-pane hath shone
With thy lamplight and thy face.

"Let no lad with his guitar
Strum adown the bordering ways.
Mine the road to watch and bar,
Mine alone to sing thy praise.

"Let no man my courage brave.
He shall lose his ears, egad!
Who shall howl his love and rave
In a couplet good or bad.

" Restless doth my dagger lie.
Come, who 'll venture its rebuff?
Who would wear for every sigh
Blood's red flower upon his ruff?

" Blood grows weary of its veins;
For it yearns to be displayed.
Night is ominous with rains,
Haste, ye cowards, back to shade!

" On, thou braggart, else aroint!
Well thy forearm cover thou.
On, and with my dagger's point
Let me write upon thy brow!

" Let them come, alone, in mass:
Firm of foot I bide my place.
For thy glory as they pass
Will I slash each paltry face.

" O'er the gutter, ere thy clear,
Snowy feet shall be defiled,
By the Rood! a bridge I 'll rear
With the bones of gallants wild.

" I would slay, thy love to wear,
Any foe — yea, glad and proud
Satan's very self to dare,
So thy sheets became my shroud.

"Sightless window — deafened door!
Wilt thou never heed my sounds?
Like a wounded bull I roar,
Maddening the baying hounds.

"Drive at least a poor nail, then,
Where my heart may hang inert —
For I want it not again,
With its madness and its hurt!" *

"The devil! that is pretty ferocious poetry," thought Andrès. "The stanzas cannot be called insipid, to say the least of it. Let us see if Militona, for it is in her honour that this nocturnal disturbance is taking place, appreciates these elegiacal lines composed by Hector, Don Spavento, Fracasse, or Mountain-Smiter. This must be the terrible lover she is so afraid of, and I do not wonder at it."

Don Andrès, having put his head a little way out of the shadow in which he was concealed, was caught by a moonbeam and revealed to Juancho's vigilant glance.

"All right, I am caught," said Andrès. "Let me show a bold front."

Juancho, throwing down his guitar, which rattled lugubriously on the pavement, dashed at Andrès, whose face was lighted up, and whom he recognised at once.

* Put into English verse by Agnes Lee.

"What are you doing here at this hour?" said he, in a voice that shook with anger.

"Enjoying the refined pleasure of listening to your music."

"If you did listen you must have heard that I forbid any one coming into this street while I am singing."

"I am of a most disobedient disposition," replied Andrès very coolly.

"I shall make you change your disposition forthwith."

"Indeed you will not; I am wedded to my habits."

"Then defend yourself, or die like a dog," howled Juancho, as he drew his navaja and rolled his cloak round his arm.

His gestures were imitated by Andrès, who fell on guard with a promptitude that proved him a skilful knife-player and that somewhat surprised the torero. Andrès had long studied knife-play under one of the best teachers in Seville, just as fashionable young men in Paris study stick-play, quarter-staff, and boxing with the foot, in accordance with the mathematical principles of Lecour and Boucher.

Juancho turned round his adversary, putting out his left arm, protected by several thicknesses of cloth, as a

buckler, his right arm drawn back to give greater impetus and power to the stroke. He kept rising and sinking on his bent legs, drawing himself up like a giant or making himself small as a dwarf, but ever the point of his knife met Andrès' cloak in a ready parade. Sometimes he would suddenly draw back, or again dash fiercely forward, spring to right or left, balancing his weapon like a javelin and threatening to hurl it.

Andrès repeatedly returned such swift and well aimed ripostes to these attacks that any one but Juancho would have failed to parry them. It was really a very fine fight, and worthy of having a gallery of skilled spectators. Unfortunately, every window was shut and the street was absolutely deserted. Why, O ye academicians of San Lucar beach, of Potro de Cordoba, of the Albaycin of Gránada and the barrio of Triana, why were you not present to pass judgment on those beautiful thrusts!

The two adversaries, strong though they were, began to feel fatigued; the perspiration poured from their faces, their breath sounded like the bellows of a forge, their feet struck the ground more heavily, their springs were less elastic. Juancho had felt Andrès' knife cut through his sleeve, and his rage had been increased by

this. He resolved on a supreme effort, and, at the risk of being killed, he sprang on his foe like a tiger.

Andrès fell backwards, and in his fall burst open the ill-closed door of Militona's house, in front of which the encounter had taken place. Juancho walked calmly away, and the sereno, who was passing by the corner of the street, called out: —

"Nothing new; half-past eleven; a serene and starry sky."

V

JUANCHO, on hearing the watchman's call, had gone off without assuring himself whether Andrès was dead, or wounded only. He thought he had killed him, so sure was he that his thrust was infallible. He felt no remorse whatever, for it had been a fair fight, and the ugly satisfaction of being rid of his rival prevailed in him over every other consideration.

It is impossible to describe the state of anxiety in which Militona was plunged while the fight lasted. She had been attracted to the window by the sound of it, and tried to call out, but her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth, terror clutched at her throat, and dazed, half crazy, stumbling, she got down or rather she let herself slide down the stairs, she knew not how, and reached the bottom just as Andrès was falling, and in doing so closing the unfastened leaf of the door.

Fortunately Juancho did not see the despairing and passionate way in which the girl threw herself upon

Andrès' body; if he had done so, he would have committed two murders instead of one.

Militona put her hand to Andrès' heart and fancied she could feel it beating a little. The watchman was again passing by, repeating his monotonous refrain, and she called him to her assistance. The worthy gallego hastened up and bringing his lantern near the face of the wounded man, said: —

"Why, it is the young fellow to whom I lent my lantern to read a letter by."

Then he bent down over him to ascertain whether he was alive or dead.

The sereno, with his strongly marked features and kindly expression; the young girl, white as wax, her deadly pallor rendered the more conspicuous by her ebony eyebrows; and the body of the inanimate man whose head she was supporting in her lap, formed a group worthy to tempt Rembrandt's brush. The yellow gleams of the lantern threw strange reflections upon the three faces, and formed in the centre of the scene the brilliant spot of light which the Dutch painter loved to have shining in his ruddy shadows. It might, however, have required a daintier and gentler brush than his to reproduce Militona's wondrous

beauty. She looked like a statue of Grief kneeling by a tomb.

"He breathes," said the watchman, after a short examination. "Let us have a look at the wound."

With this he undid the still unconscious Andrès' jacket.

"Ah! that was a fine blow," he exclaimed in a tone of respectful astonishment. "Struck from below upwards according to rule; very neat indeed. If I am not mistaken, it was dealt by a man of Seville; I have seen so many knife-wounds that I am an expert on the subject. But the question is what we are to do with the young chap; he is not fit to be carried away, and if he were I do not know where to carry him, for he cannot tell us his address just at present."

"Let us take him up to my room," said Militona. "Since I was the first to come to his help, he belongs to me."

The sereno uttered the rallying call, summoned a fellow-watchman to his aid, and the pair of them started carefully up the steep stairs. Militona followed them, supporting the body with her little hands, and trying to make the ascent easier for the poor wounded

man, who was gently laid on the maiden's bed, with its vandyked muslin counterpane.

One of the men fetched a surgeon, and the other, while Militona was tearing up linen and making bandages and lint out of it, searched Andrès' pockets to see if he could find a card or a letter that would tell who he was. He found nothing. Even the bit of paper on which Militona had warned Andrès of the danger he was running, had fallen from his pocket during the fight, and had been blown far away by the wind. Therefore, until the wounded man should recover consciousness, there was no clue for the police to work upon.

Militona stated that she had heard the noise of a quarrel, then a man fall, but told no more; for, although she disliked Juancho, she would not accuse him of a crime of which she was herself the involuntary cause. The torero's violent manners, which terrified her, at least proved that his love for her was boundless, and even when a woman does not return such a love, she is not sorry to have inspired it.

The surgeon came at last and examined the wound, which turned out to be not very serious, the blade of the knife having slipped along a rib. Andrès, who had

been stunned by the force of the blow and the shock of his fall, recovered his senses as soon as the probe touched the lips of the wound. The first thing he saw on opening his eyes was Militona handing a bandage to the surgeon. Old Aldonza, whom the noise had brought in, was standing on the other side of the bed uttering condolences. The surgeon, having finished dressing the wound, promised to return the next day.

Andrès, who was beginning to grasp things, cast a glance, still rather bewildered, around him ; he could not make out how he happened to be in the little white chamber, upon the chaste little couch, between an angel and an old witch. There was a break in his recollections due to his swoon, and he could not understand by what transition he had passed from the street, where he was defending himself against Juancho's navaja, into the sweet Paradise that was Militona's home.

" I told you that Juancho would do something desperate," said tia Aldonza. " You saw how angrily he glared at us. It was bound to come. A nice mess we are in now, and what it will be when he learns that you have taken this young fellow into your room . . ."

"I could not let him die at the door, could I?" answered Militona. "It is through me he has come to grief. Besides, Juancho will not say anything; it will be difficult enough for him to escape the punishment he deserves."

"The patient is coming to himself," said the old woman. "Look! his eyes are opening and the colour is coming back to his face."

"You must not try to speak; the surgeon forbids it," said the girl, seeing that Andrès was trying to whisper something; and she placed her hand on his lips with a nurse's pretty air of authority.

When dawn, welcomed by the song of the quail and the cricket, shed its rosy light in the little room, it revealed a picture that would have made Juancho rave with anger. Militona, who had sat up all night by the bedside of the patient, had fallen asleep, overcome by fatigue and the excitement of the past night. Unconsciously her head, seeking a support as she dozed off, had rested on the corner of Andrès' pillow; her lovely hair had come loose and was spread in black waves over the white sheet, while Andrès, who was not asleep, was busy curling one lock of it round his fingers. Any evil construction that might have been

put on the scene was, however, set at naught by the young man's wound and by the presence of tia Aldonza, who was snoring at the other end of the chamber in a way that rivalled the organ in Our Lady of Seville.

Had Juancho suspected that instead of killing his rival he had procured him the means of entering Militona's room, of being laid on that bed which he, the man with the iron heart and the steel muscles, never looked at without trembling and turning pale, and of spending the night in the chamber to which he gained difficult access during the day, and outside of which he strode up and down in the darkness, wrathful and cursing, — had he suspected this, he would have rolled on the ground in his anger and torn his breast with his nails.

Nor had Andrès, who was endeavouring to make Militona's acquaintance, ever thought of doing so in that particular way.

The young girl woke, did up her hair in great confusion, and asked the patient how he felt.

"Very well," answered he, casting on his beauteous nurse a look filled with love and gratitude.

When Andrès' servants saw that he did not come

back, they took it for granted that he was at some jolly supper party or that he had gone into the country, and did not further trouble their heads about him.

In vain did Feliciana expect his customary visit; Andrès did not appear. The piano was the sufferer, for Feliciana, annoyed at his absence, slammed chords angrily upon it. In Spain a man who does not pay his call upon his novia at the appointed hour incurs the reproach of ingratitude and faithlessness. Not that Feliciana was deeply enamoured of Andrès; she was not naturally passionate, and besides, she considered excess in love quite indelicate; but she was accustomed to see him, and as his future wife, she looked upon him already as her own property. She went from the piano to the balcony a score of times and, in opposition to English etiquette, which forbids a woman looking out of the window, she bent over to see if Don Andrès was or was not coming.

"I suppose I shall meet him at the Prado this evening," said she to herself by way of consolation, "and when I do I will scold him in proper fashion."

Unquestionably the Prado, at seven o'clock on a summer evening, is one of the finest promenades in the world; not because cooler shades and a more pictu-

resque site may not be found elsewhere, but because nowhere is there so much animation, or such a joyous, bustling company.

The Prado extends from the Puerta de Recolétos to the Puerta Atocha, but it is not much frequented save in the portion comprised between the Calle d'Alcala and the Calle San Jeronímo. This part is called the Salón, which is not a very rustic name for a promenade. Rows of short trees, polled in order to make the foliage spread, cast miserly shade upon the people. The drive reserved for carriages is bordered with chairs, like the Boulevard de Gand (Boulevard des Italiens), and with candelabra like those in the Place de la Concorde, these having taken the place of the pretty lamp-posts with volutes regularly curling, from which, until quite lately, hung the lamps. On this drive parade carriages brought from London and Brussels, tilburys, calashes, landaus, with coats of arms on the panels, and occasionally an old Spanish coach drawn by four lusty mules with shining coats.

The riders bend from their English trotters or make their handsome Andalusian horses prance and paw. These horses have their manes plaited with red ribbons, they bend their necks in swanlike fashion, and they

move with as much undulating grace as the hips of an Arab dancer. From time to time there gallops past a superb Cordova barb, black as ebony, and worthy of eating pearl barley from an alabaster manger in a Caliph's stables, or else some marvellous beauty, a Murillo Madonna that has stepped from her frame, drives by enthroned in her carriage with a Beaudrand hat for a halo.

In the Salón, properly so called, swarms an ever changing crowd, a living stream, with contrary currents, eddies, and whirlpools, flowing along between the quays of seated people.

The white or black lace mantillas frame in their light folds the heavenliest faces it is possible to see. It is rare to see an ugly woman. On the Prado, plain women are merely pretty; fans open and shut with swift rattling, and the *agurs* (good-day), exchanged in passing, are accompanied by gracious smiles or a wave of the hand. It is quite like the foyer at the opera in carnival time; like a fancy dress ball.

On the other side, in the walks that run past the Artillery Park and the Museum of Painting, stroll a few misanthropical smokers who prefer the coolness and silence of evening to heat and the bustle of the crowd.

Feliciana, who was driving in an open carriage with her father, Don Geronimo, looked, but in vain, for her lover among the young riders. He did not, according to his habit, come to prance alongside her carriage. Also lookers-on were surprised to see the equipage of Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios drive four times up and down without its usual escort.

Presently Feliciana, not seeing Andrès in the equestrian state, supposed that he might be strolling on foot in the Salón, and told her father she desired to walk a little; but after she had taken three or four turns in the side walk and the Salón, she came to the conclusion that Andrès was not there at all.

A young Englishman, who had brought letters of introduction to Don Geronimo, came up to pay his respects to her, and began one of those laboured conversations in languages they do not know, with the strangest of gurglings and intonations, which the dwellers in the British Isles alone have perseverance enough to carry on.

Feliciana, who could read "The Vicar of Wakefield" with fair ease, came to the rescue of the young islander with charming kindliness, and smiled in the sweetest way upon his horrible lingo. At the Teatro

del Circo, to which they afterwards repaired, she explained the ballet to him and told him the names of the people in the boxes. Yet Andrès did not turn up.

When they had returned home, Feliciana said to her father:

"Andrès has not been here to-day."

"Why, that is true," returned Geronimo. "I shall send to his house to inquire. He must be ill."

Half an hour later the servant returned and said: —

"Don Andrès de Salcedo has not been home since yesterday."

VI

THE next day passed without news of Andrès. Inquiries were made at the houses of every one of his friends, but no one had seen him for two days.

This was strange. It was suggested that he had been called away unexpectedly on important business, but his servants, on being questioned by Don Geronimo, stated that their master had gone out, two days before, at six in the evening, after having dined as usual, without having made any preparations or said anything that would point to his having gone on a trip. He was dressed in a black frock-coat, a yellow waistcoat of English piqué, and white trousers, as if on his way to the Prado.

Don Geronimo, much troubled, ordered an examination of Andrès' room, with the object of ascertaining whether he had not left on some piece of furniture a note explaining his disappearance. But the only paper found was cigarette paper.

How could this extraordinary absence of his be accounted for?

By suicide?

But Andrès was neither crossed in love nor troubled about money, since he was ere long to marry the girl of his heart, and had an income of a hundred thousand reals derived from safe investments. Besides, it is impossible for a man to drown himself in the Manzanarès in the month of June, unless he deliberately digs a well in it.

By an ambush?

Andrès had no enemies, at least he was not known to have any. His self-command and peaceful habits put a duel out of the question; just as much as a row in which he might have been killed. Then, had this happened the fact would have become known, and Andrès would have been brought back home, either alive or dead.

It was plain that there was here a mystery which the police alone could solve. And Geronimo, simple-minded like all honest people, believed the police to be omniscient and infallible, and therefore had recourse to it.

The police, in the person of the alcalde of the quarter, put its spectacles on its nose, looked through its books, and found nothing in them, since the even-

ing when Andrès had disappeared, that could be connected with him. The night had been a very quiet one in the most noble and most heroic city of Madrid; bar a few burglaries, rows in low resorts, and some fights between drunken men in pot-houses, everything had been lovely.

"There was, however, an attempt at murder in the neighbourhood of the Plaza de Lavapiès," said the worthy magistrate before he closed his register.

"Oh! sir," quoth Don Geronimo, taking fright, "can you tell me any particulars?"

"How was Don Andrès de Salcedo dressed the last time he left his house?" asked the magistrate, with a very wise look.

"He had on a black frock-coat," replied Geronimo, with much anxiety.

"Are you prepared to swear that it was black, really black," went on the alcalde, "and not negrohead, for instance, or bronze-green, or dark-gray or maroon? The shade is very important."

"It was black, I am sure of it; I could swear it was black. Yes, before God and men; black was the colour of my future son-in-law's frock-coat. It was a stylish colour, as my daughter Feliciana calls it."

"Your replies show you to be a well educated man," put in the magistrate. "So you are sure the frock-coat was black?"

"Yes, worthy sir; it was black, I am convinced of it, and nothing will make me swerve from that."

"The victim in this case wore a short jacket, of the kind called Marseillaise, and of a tobacco colour. Of course at night a black frock-coat might be taken for a brown jacket," said the magistrate to himself, as if turning the matter over in his mind. "Don Geronimo, can you manage to recollect the kind of waistcoat Don Andrès wore on that evening?"

"A vest of yellow English piqué."

"The wounded man had on a blue vest with filigree buttons. Blue and yellow are not much alike; there is a discrepancy here. What trousers had he on, sir?"

"White trousers, sir, — of duck, with straps, fitting close to the boot. So his valet, who assisted him to dress on that fatal day, tells me."

"The report states that the trousers are gray and full, and the shoes of white calf. This is not the same thing. This costume is that of a majo, of a dandy of the lower classes, who got this nasty blow in the course

of a row over a short-skirted damsel. With the best will in the world I cannot recognise Don Andrès de Salcedo in this person. Here is the description given of the wounded man, which was taken down very carefully by the sereno: 'Oval face, round chin, ordinary forehead, medium nose, no distinguishing marks.' Do you recognise Don Andrès in this portrait?"

"Not in the least," answered Don Geronimo earnestly. "But how are we going to find him?"

"Do not be disturbed about that; the police watches over all our citizens; it sees everything, hears everything, and is everywhere. Nothing escapes it. Argus had but a hundred eyes; the police has a thousand, that cannot be induced to close by being played to on the flute. We shall find Don Andrès de Salcedo, even if he were in the bottomless pit. I shall put two inspectors on his track, the cleverest detectives that ever lived, Argamasilla and Covachuelo, and within twenty-four hours we shall know what has happened."

Don Geronimo thanked the alcalde, bowed, and returned home quite comforted. He related the conversation he had had with the police to his daughter, who did not for one moment suspect that the manolo

who had been wounded in the Calle del Povar was the young man she was engaged to marry.

Feliciana mourned the loss of her betrothed with all the reserve proper in a well brought-up young lady, for it would be indelicate in a young person to seem to regret a man too much. From time to time she put to her eyes a lace-bordered handkerchief, to wipe away a tear she brought up with difficulty to the corner of her eye. The unused duets lay prone and melancholy upon the piano, itself closed: a sign of profound mental disturbance in Feliciana's case. Don Geronimo, on his part, was impatiently awaiting the expiration of the twenty-four hours in order to read the triumphant report to be made by Argamasilla and Covachuelo.

The pair of clever detectives first went to Andrès' residence and managed to pump the servants very neatly about their master's habits. They learned that Andrès drank chocolate in the morning, had a siesta at noon, dressed at about three o'clock, went to see Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios, dined at six, and came home to bed about midnight, after the theatre or supper. This caused the detectives to meditate deeply. They learned also that on leaving his house Andrès had gone

down the Calle d'Alcala as far as the Calle Ancha de Peligros, which precious piece of information was imparted to them by an Asturian porter who was in the habit of standing near the door.

They proceeded to the Calle de Peligros, and managed to ascertain that Andrès had gone that way, two evenings before, at a few minutes after six. There was good reason to believe that he had continued on his way through the Calle de la Cruz.

Having obtained this important result, and worn out by the violent mental exertion it involved, they entered a hermitage — that is the name given to wine-shops in Madrid — and had a game of cards, with a bottle of Manzanilla wine, which carried them on to the next morning.

After a short sleep they resumed their investigations, and succeeded in tracing Andrès to the neighbourhood of the Rastro, but there they lost track of him, no one being able to give them any information concerning a young gentleman in a black frock-coat, yellow piqué vest, and white trousers. He had vanished completely. Many had seen him go, none had seen him return. The detectives were fairly puzzled. Andrès could not possibly have been kidnapped in broad daylight in

one of the most densely populated quarters of Madrid, yet, unless it was supposed that a trap-door had opened under him, there was no way of explaining his disappearance.

The pair wandered a long time about the Rastro, questioned a number of dealers, but failed to elicit any further information. They even made inquiries in the very shop where Andrès had changed his dress, but it happened to be the wife who received them, while it was the husband who had sold the clothes. Consequently she was unable to tell them anything, and besides, did not understand the guarded questions they put to her. Indeed, she took them for thieves, on account of their appearance, and turned them out, in a pretty bad temper, although they were the very reverse of what she thought, and then looked round to see whether they had taken anything.

Such was the result of their day's work. Don Geronimo went back to the police-office, and was gravely told that they were on the track of the guilty parties, but that too much haste might compromise matters. The worthy gentleman, greatly admiring, reported the reply of the police to Feliciana, who raised her eyes to heaven, uttered a sigh and said, "Poor

Andrès! " — an expression she deemed not over strong under the circumstances.

A curious incident complicated the mysterious affair. A young lad some fifteen years of age, had left at Andrès' house a fairly large parcel, and had withdrawn hastily after saying, " To be given to Don de Salcedo." These words, apparently so simple, struck every one as infernally ironical when the parcel was opened. It contained — can the reader guess? — the black frock-coat, the yellow piqué vest, the white trousers, and the neat patent-leather boots with red morocco tops belonging to the unfortunate Andrès. Whoever had sent them had carried sarcasm to the point of rolling his Paris gloves carefully one within the other.

In presence of this strange fact, unexampled in the annals of crime, Argamasilla and Covachuelo were struck dumb with amazement. Then the one raised his hands to heaven, and the other let his hang limp down his sides, in an attitude expressive of discouragement; the former said, *O tempora!* and the latter, *O mores!*

That these two alguazils should speak Latin need surprise no one. Argamasilla had studied for the

church, and Covachuelo for the bar, but both had met with misfortunes. Which of us has not come to grief at some time or other?

The returning of the clothes of the victim, neatly done up and corded, to his residence was unquestionably a refinement of uncommon perversity. This mingling of raillery and crime was bound to furnish the attorney-general with a fine text for his speech.

Meanwhile the examination of the clothing made by the detectives merely perplexed them still more. The cloth of the coat was absolutely intact; there was no trace of any round or triangular hole, betokening the passage of a knife-blade or of a bullet. It might be the victim had been choked to death. But in that case a struggle must have taken place, and the vest and the trousers would not have been in such good condition; they would certainly have been rumpled, out of shape, torn; for it could not be supposed that Andrès de Salcedo had first carefully undressed himself before the crime was committed, and then yielded himself up stark naked to the daggers of the assassins in order to save his clothes. Such a course would have been unworthy of him. It was really enough to make

cleverer men than Argamasilla and Covachuelo give up in despair.

Covachuelo, who was the better reasoner of the pair, after having pressed his brow with his hands for a quarter of an hour, came to the following admirable conclusion : —

" If Don Andrès de Salcedo is not dead, he must be alive, for men are one or the other ; I am not aware of the existence of an intermediate state."

Argamasilla nodded in acquiescence.

" Now, if he is alive, as I am convinced he is, he cannot be going about without any clothes on, *more ferarum*. He carried no parcel when he left his house, and as we have his garments here, he must necessarily have purchased others ; for it is not to be supposed that, in our advanced state of civilisation, a man should be content to go about in the costume worn by Adam."

Argamasilla's eyes were starting from his head, so intent was he on following the deductions of his friend Covachuelo.

" I do not believe Don Andrès had caused to be prepared beforehand the clothes he put on later in some house in the quarter where we lost track of him. I am

of opinion that he purchased a suit from some dealer and then sent back his own garments."

"You are a genius, a god," said Argamasilla, pressing Covachuelo to his breast. "Allow me to embrace you. From this day forward I am no longer your friend, I am your devoted follower, your dog, your slave. Do with me as you will, O great man, I follow you wherever you go. Ah! if the government were only just to you, you would be political chief in the greatest cities in the kingdom, instead of a mere police officer. But governments are never just."

"We shall proceed to investigate every second-hand dealer's shop, as well as every shop in the city where clothes are sold ready-made. We shall examine their sales books, and in that way we shall learn the new description of Don de Salcedo. If the porter had only had the sense to have the muchacho who brought the parcel arrested, or to arrest him himself, we should have learned who had sent him and whence he came. But people who are not in our business never think of anything; besides, this point could not have been foreseen. Come, let us start, Argamasilla; you shall go the round of the tailors in the Calle Mayor, and I shall question the second-hand dealers in the Rastro."

A few hours later the two friends reported to the alcalde.

Argamasilla detailed, fully and minutely, the result of his investigations. A person dressed in a majo costume, and apparently labouring under great excitement, had purchased and paid for, without haggling over the price, — a mark of deep mental agitation, — a black frock-coat and a pair of black trousers from one of the leading merchant tailors in the arcades of the Calle Mayor.

Covachuelo stated that a dealer on the Rastro had sold a manolo's jacket, vest, and sash to a person wearing a black frock-coat and white trousers, who was most probably Don Andrès de Salcedo himself.

Both these men had changed their clothes in the back-shop and had gone out wearing their new garments, which, in view of the rank in life to which they respectively appeared to belong, were unquestionably disguises. Now for what purpose, on the same day, and almost at the same hour, had a gentleman assumed the dress of a majo, and a majo that of a gentleman? This was a point which the meaner intelligence of subalterns such as Covachuelo and Argamasilla could not solve, but which the clear-sighted

magistrate to whom they had the honour to report would infallibly see the bearing of. For their part, with all due reservation, they had come to the conclusion that the mysterious disappearance, the singular coincidence in the assumption of disguises, the clothes sent back as if by way of challenge, all these inexplicable things, in a word, must be connected with some wide-spread conspiracy, the object of which was to set Espartero or the Count de Montemolin on the throne. No doubt the guilty parties had started, wearing their borrowed dresses, to join a Carlist group or a party of guerillas endeavouring to reorganise in Aragon or Catalonia. Spain was dancing on a volcano, but if the authorities would only pay them for the job, they, Argamasilla and Covachuelo, would undertake to extinguish the volcano, to prevent the guilty parties from joining their accomplices, and to hand in, within a week, the list of the names of the conspirators and the plans of the conspiracy.

The alcalde listened to this remarkable report with all due attention, and said to the two detectives: —

"Have you any information concerning the actions of these two individuals after they had each disguised themselves?"

"The majo, wearing the dress of a gentleman, went for a walk in the Prado, then to the Teatro del Circo, and ate an ice at the Café de la Bourse."

"The gentleman, dressed as a majo, walked several times round the Plaza de Lavapiès and through the adjacent streets, strolling along and looking at the manolas at their windows. Then he drank an iced lemonade in an *horchateria de chufas*," said Covachuelo.

"They both acted in accordance with the dress they wore," said the alcalde. "They have given proof of deep dissimulation and hellish skill. The one was trying to gain popularity and to sound the feelings of the lower classes; the other was seeking to assure the higher that they had the sympathy and the co-operation of the lower. But we are keeping our eyes on them. We shall catch you red-handed, gentlemen and conspirators, whether you be Carlists or Ayacuchos, Progressists or Reactionaries. Ha! ha! Argus had a hundred eyes, but the police has a thousand, and these are never closed in sleep."

This was the worthy man's pet phrase, his hobby, his Lillibullero. He was right in thinking that when he had no ideas it took the place of them most satisfactorily.

"You, Argamasilla, and you, Covachuelo, shall have your reward in money. But have you ascertained what became of your two criminals — for there is no doubt of their criminality — after they had performed the manœuvres required of them in the execution of their evil projects?"

"We have not, sir; for it was already dark, and as we could get only ocular and vague testimony concerning their apparent and past operations, we lost track of them after night-fall."

"The devil you did! That is a pity," said the alcalde.

"But we shall find them again," shouted the two friends enthusiastically.

In the course of the day Don Geronimo dropped in to learn if there was any news.

The magistrate received him rather coldly, and on Don Geronimo apologising and begging his pardon for having been so importunate, he said to him: —

"You ought not to appear to take so much interest in Don Andrès de Salcedo. He is implicated in a vast conspiracy, the threads of which we are on the point of getting hold of."

"Andrès conspiring!" exclaimed Don Geronimo. "Never!"

"He is conspiring, I tell you," replied the police magistrate, peremptorily.

"So gentle, so quiet, so bright, so inoffensive a young fellow?"

"He feigned to be inoffensive just as Brutus feigned to be mad. It was his way of concealing his game and drawing attention away from himself. We are up to all those tricks, we old hands. The best thing that can happen to him is not to turn up again. You can wish him nothing better."

Poor Geronimo withdrew in great confusion, and much ashamed of his lack of perspicacity. He had dandled Andrès on his knee, he had known him since childhood, yet he had never suspected that he had taken to his bosom so dangerous a conspirator. He admired and was terrified at the dreadful sagacity of the police, which had so quickly penetrated a secret that he had never suspected, though he had seen the criminal daily and been so vastly mistaken in him that he had actually intended to make him his son-in-law.

Feliciana's amazement was boundless when she learned that she had been courted so assiduously by the leader of a vast Carlist plot. Don Andrès must indeed have been endowed with great strength of mind never

to have allowed his political preoccupations to show on the surface, and meanwhile to go on rehearsing so phlegmatically duets by Bellini! After that, who could trust to airs of indifference, to quiet looks, serene eyes, and smiling lips? Who could have suspected that Andrès, who never got excited save over bull-fights, and who appeared to have no other opinions than a preference for Sevilla to Rodrigues, and Chiclanero to Arjona, concealed such vast projects under apparent frivolity?

The two detectives resumed their investigations, and learned that the young man who had been wounded and taken into Militona's room was the same who had bought clothes in the Rastro. The report of the watchman and of the second-hand dealer agreed in every particular. The brown jacket, the blue vest, the red sash, — there could be no mistake.

This fact somewhat upset the hopes of Argamasilla and Covachuelo concerning the conspiracy. They would have preferred that Andrès should have disappeared. The case seemed to be resolving itself into a mere love affair, an innocent quarrel between rivals, a murder, purely and simply; in fact into the most insignificant of matters. The neighbours had heard the serenade, and the whole thing was now plain.

Said Covachuelo with a sigh: —

"I am always unlucky."

And Argamasilla returned in tearful tones: —

"I was born under an unlucky star."

Poor beggars! They had nosed out a conspiracy and all they had come upon was a wretched little row ending only in serious wounding! It was pitiable indeed.

Let us return to Juancho, whom I have neglected since his knife duel with Andrès. An hour afterwards he had softly made his way back to the scene of the combat, and had been greatly surprised not to find the body in the spot where, he felt certain, he had seen it fall. Could his adversary have picked himself up and dragged himself farther away in his agony? Or had the watch gathered him in? He had no means of finding out. Should he remain in Madrid or take to flight? Flight would be a confession of guilt; and besides, his jealous nature could not bear the thought of leaving Militona free to act as she pleased. The night had been dark, the street had been empty, no one had seen him. Who could possibly accuse him?

Nevertheless the fight had lasted long enough to allow his foe to recognise him, for toreros, like actors,

have faces well known to the public, and if his rival had not been killed on the spot, as was not unlikely, he might have denounced him. Juancho, who was not in good odour with the police on account of his readiness to use his knife, ran the risk, if he were caught, of spending a few seasons in the Spanish possessions in Africa, at Ceuta or Melilla.

He therefore returned home, brought out his Cordova horse, threw a striped blanket on its back, and started off at a gallop.

Had a painter seen that athletic horseman passing through the streets, sitting firmly on the big black horse, with its wild mane and flying tail, striking showers of sparks from the uneven pavement, and dashing past the whitish walls on which his shadow found it difficult to keep up with him, he would have painted a strikingly effective figure; for the noisy flight through the silent city, the rush through the peaceful night, were most dramatic — but all painters were in bed just then.

Juancho soon reached the Caravanchel road, passed the Segovia bridge, and tore at full speed through the dark, lonely country. He had already gone some twelve miles when the thought of Militona recurred to him with such violence that he was unable to proceed

farther. He took it into his head that he had not struck his blow straight enough, and that he had perhaps inflicted but a slight wound upon his foe. He could see him cured, kneeling before the smiling Militona. Cold sweat broke out over his forehead; his teeth were clenched so hard that he could not force them apart; he unconsciously pressed his knees so fiercely into his horse that the noble animal, feeling its ribs compressed, could not breathe and stopped short. Juancho felt as if red-hot needles were being driven into his heart.

He swung his horse round and stormed back to the city. When he reached it the animal was covered with lather. Three o'clock in the morning had just struck. Juancho made his way at top speed to the Calle del Povar. Militona's lamp was still shining, like a chaste, quivering star, at the corner of the old wall. The torero tried to burst in the door leading into the alley-way, but in spite of his tremendous strength he could not manage it. Militona had taken care to put up the iron bars on the inside. Juancho returned to his lodgings broken down, pitifully wretched, and a prey to the most horrible uncertainty, for he had seen two shadows projected upon Miltona's

curtain. Could he possibly have killed the wrong man?

As soon as it was broad daylight again, the torero, muffled in his cloak, and his hat pulled down over his eyes, came back to the Calle del Povar to listen to the different versions of the events that had occurred during the night. He learned that the young man was not dead, but that it had been found impossible to carry him away, and that he had therefore been taken into Militona's room, for which charitable action the girl was being praised by all the gossips of the place. In spite of his strength, he felt his knees giving way, and was compelled to lean against the wall. His rival was in Militona's room! On her bed! No more horrible torture could have befallen him in the ninth circle of Hell.

He came to a decisive resolution, entered the house, and began to ascend the stairs with a heavy step that sounded more sinister than that of the Commander's statue.

VII

ON reaching the first-floor landing, Juancho, half crazed and staggering, stopped and remained for a moment as if petrified; he was afraid of himself and the horrors that were about to take place. Thoughts innumerable crowded into his brain. Should he be satisfied with trampling on his rival and depriving him of what little of his abhorred breath was left? Should he kill Militona or set fire to the house? He was tossed about on a sea of dreadful, insensate, contradictory desires. He did have a gleam of common-sense, and was on the point of returning down stairs; he even turned half round, but jealousy drove anew its poisoned thorn into his heart, and he started afresh up the steep stairs.

It would have been difficult to come upon a more vigorously built man than Juancho; his neck, round as a pillar and strong as a tower, connected his massive head and his powerful shoulders; his invincible arms were a network of muscles of steel; his breast surpassed the marble pectorals of the gladiators of antiquity; with

one hand he could pull out a bull's horn, yet the intensity of his mental suffering neutralised his physical strength. His temples were bathed in sweat, his limbs were giving way under him, the blood was rushing to his brain, and flames of fire swept past his eyes. He was several times compelled to cling to the balustrade to save himself from falling and rolling like a helpless body down the stairs, so fierce was the pain he experienced.

And as he climbed step after step, he repeated, gnashing his teeth like a wild beast: —

"In her room! In her room!"

And mechanically he opened and shut the long Albacete knife he had drawn from his belt.

Within the room silence reigned, and all Juancho heard was the surging of the blood in his veins and the dull beating of his own heart.

What was going on in that silent chamber, behind the feeble rampart of the door that separated him from his foe? No doubt Militona was bending with tender and sympathetic complacency over the couch of the wounded man, watching over his sleep and soothing his suffering.

"Oh!" said Juancho to himself, "had I but known

that all that was needed to win your love was a knife-thrust in the chest, I should have stabbed myself, and not him. In that accursed fight I should have purposely given him an opening, so that I might fall dying in front of your door. But you would have let me writhe in agony upon the pavement without offering to help me, for I am no pretty gentleman with white kids and well-fitting frock-coat."

And his fury blazing up at the thought, he knocked fiercely at the door.

Andrès started on his bed of pain; Militona, who was seated by him, rose straight up and pale, as if shot up by a spring; tia Aldonza turned green, made the sign of the cross, and kissed her thumb.

The knock was so fierce, short, commanding that it was impossible not to open. If a second like unto the first followed, the door would be burst in, for it was the knock of marble guests, of spectres that will not away, of all the fateful beings that come to end crises: Vengeance armed with her dagger, Justice with her sword.

Tia Aldonza opened the wicket with a trembling hand, and through the square hole saw Juancho's face. The mask of Medusa, bloodless amid its green serpent

hair, would not have produced a more tremendous effect upon the poor old woman. She tried to call out, but no sound came from her dried-up throat. She remained with fingers outspread, staring eyes, and her mouth with the cry petrified in it, as if she had been turned to stone.

It is true that the torero's face, as it showed in the setting of the wicket, was anything but reassuring. His eyes were bloodshot, his features livid, his bloodless cheeks showed like white spots on his pallid visage, his dilated nostrils worked like those of a wild beast scenting its prey, his teeth were biting into his lip swollen by the wounds thus inflicted. Jealousy, fury, and vengeance were contending on his distorted countenance.

"Our Lady of Almudela," murmured the old woman, "if you save us from this peril I will say a novena unto you and offer you a scalloped candle with velvet holder!"

Brave as Andrès was, he felt the uncomfortable sensation experienced by the bravest men when they are confronted by a peril against which they are defenceless. He instinctively extended his hand to grasp a weapon.

Juancho seeing that the door was not being opened

to him, leaned against it and shoved hard; the planks creaked and the plastering broke away from the hinges and the lock.

Militona, placing herself in front of Andrès, said in a firm and calm voice to the old woman, who was paralysed by fear: —

"Open the door, Aldonza; I will it."

Aldonza drew the bolt and flattening herself against the wall, pulled the door upon herself by way of protection, as did the belluarii when letting a tiger into the circus, or the attendants at the toril when setting free a Gaviria or Colmenar bull.

Juancho, who had anticipated more resistance, entered slowly, somewhat disconcerted at not meeting with obstacles. But one glance cast at Andrès lying on Militona's bed, made his wrath blaze out again. He caught hold of the door, to which old Aldonza, persuaded her last hour had come, was clinging with all her strength, and shut it in spite of the poor woman's efforts. Then he leaned against it and crossed his arms on his breast.

"God in Heaven!" stammered the old woman, her teeth chattering, "he will murder us all. I had better go to the window and call for help."

She started to do so, but Juancho, guessing her intention, caught hold of her dress, and roughly threw her back against the wall, tearing her garment in doing so.

"Do not attempt to call out, old beldame, or I shall wring your neck like a fowl's and send your old soul back to the devil! Do not step between me and the object of my anger, or I shall crush you out of the way."

As he spoke these words he pointed to Andrès, who, pale and weak, was trying to raise his head from the pillow.

The situation was frightful, for no noise had occurred to alarm the neighbours. Besides, such was the terror inspired by Juancho that these same neighbours would have shut themselves up in their own rooms rather than interfere. It would have taken a great deal of time to fetch the police or the soldiers, and even to do so would have necessitated summoning some one outside, since there was no means of leaving the chamber of doom.

Thus poor Andrès, already wounded with a knife-thrust, weakened by loss of blood, unarmed, incapable of using a weapon had he possessed one,

incommoded by bandages and blankets, and deprived of any human means of succour, lay at the mercy of a brute drunk with jealousy and rage. And all this was the result of his having looked at a pretty manola at the bull-fight. Just at this moment it may be assumed that he regretted the piano, the afternoon tea, and the prosaic manners of civilisation. He did cast, however, a suppliant glance at Militona, as if to beg her not to attempt a useless struggle; but she was so radiantly beautiful, pale as she was with terror, that he was not sorry to have made her acquaintance even at such a price.

She stood, one hand resting on the bed, as if to defend Andrès, the other pointing commandingly to the door.

"What brings you here, murderer?" said she to Juancho in a ringing voice. "You are looking for a lover in a room where there is only a wounded man. Go at once. I wonder you do not dread the wound will bleed afresh in your presence. Are you not satisfied with slaying? Must you be an *assassin?*"

The girl laid such stress upon that word, and followed it up with so searching a look, that Juancho

was disconcerted, reddened, turned pale, and the expression of his features became anxious instead of ferocious as it had been. After a moment of silence, he said in a broken voice: —

"Swear to me by the relics of Monte-Sagrado and the image of Our Lady del Pilar, swear by your father, who was a hero, by your mother, who was a saint, that you do not love that fellow, and I go."

Andrès anxiously awaited Militona's answer.

But no answer came.

Only her long eyelashes fell upon her cheeks, that flushed slightly.

Although Militona's silence might prove his death sentence, Andrès, who had awaited her reply with anxiety, felt his heart fill with inexpressible satisfaction.

"If you will not swear," went on Juancho, "affirm it, simply. I shall believe you; you have never deceived. But you remain silent. I must kill him, then. You love him!" And he advanced towards the bed, knife in hand.

"Well, yes, I do love him!" cried the girl, her eyes blazing and her voice trembling with sublime wrath. "If he must die because of me, let him at least know that he is beloved. Let him carry into the tomb that

declaration, which shall be his recompense and your torture!"

With one spring Juancho was upon Militona and grasped her arm.

"Do not repeat what you have just said, or I will not answer for what I may do, and I shall throw you, with my navaja in your heart, upon the corpse of your fond one."

"What care I?" said the brave girl. "Do you suppose I should live if he died?"

Andrès, making a tremendous effort, tried to sit up. He attempted to call out, but only a bloody foam rose to his lips; his wound had reopened, and he fell back swooning on his pillow.

"If you do not go out of this," said Militona, on seeing the state Andrès was in, "I shall believe you vile, infamous, and a coward. I shall believe that you could have saved Dominguez, when the bull knelt down on his chest, and that you did not do it because you were basely jealous."

"Militona! Militona! you have the right to hate me, though never was a woman so loved by a man as I love you, but you have no right to despise me. No one could have saved Dominguez from his fate."

"If you do not want me to look upon you as a murderer, leave the room at once."

"Very well, I will wait until he is cured," answered Juancho, in a sombre tone. "Take the best care of him, and remember that I have sworn that as long as I live, you shall not belong to any other man."

While this discussion had been going on, the old woman had slipped out to alarm the neighbourhood and to fetch help.

Five or six men threw themselves on Juancho, who left the room with a cluster of muchachos hanging on to him. He shook them off and threw them against the wall just as a bull does with dogs, without one of them having a chance to bite and stop him. Then he quietly walked off into the maze of streets that surround the Plaza de Lavapiès.

The scene aggravated Andrès' condition. A violent fever came on, and he was delirious the whole day, the whole night, and the following day. Militona nursed him with the most tender and loving solicitude.

Meanwhile Argamasilla and Covachuelo, as I have informed my readers, had managed, by dint of inquiries, to ascertain that the manolo who had been wounded in the Calle del Povar, was none other than

Don Andrès de Salcedo, and the alcalde of the quarter had written to Don Geronimo that the young gentleman in whom he was interested had been found in the home of a Lavapiès manola, who had picked him up half-dead at her door, wearing, no one knew why, a majo's dress.

Feliciana, on receiving this news, asked herself whether an engaged young lady might visit her dangerously wounded sweetheart if she were accompanied by her father or some respectable relative. She feared that it would be shocking for a well brought-up young lady to see a man in bed, and though illness made the case different, nevertheless it might well be that a modest girl should not permit herself to look upon such a sight. On the other hand, suppose Andrès were to think she had abandoned him, and died of grief in consequence? It would be sad indeed.

"Father," said Feliciana, "we ought to go and see poor Andrès."

"Willingly, my girl," replied the old gentleman; "I was about to suggest that we should do so."

VIII

THANKS to his excellent constitution and to Militona's careful nursing, Andrès soon was on the way to restored health. He was able to speak and to sit up in bed. Then the thought of the situation he was in occurred to him; it was a somewhat embarrassing one.

He supposed, of course, that his disappearance must have caused Feliciana, Don Geronimo, and his other friends an amount of anxiety which he blamed himself for not relieving, but he could not bring himself to let his betrothed know that he was laid up in the room of a pretty girl, on whose account he had managed to get stabbed. It was a painful avowal to make, yet make it he must.

The business had assumed proportions infinitely greater than he had intended, for all he had thought of at first was having a passing intrigue with a girl of no consequence in particular. But Militona's courage and devotion had altogether altered the case. What would she say when she heard that Andrès

was engaged? The thought of Feliciana's anger touched the young patient far less than the thought of Militona's grief. To Feliciana the affair would be a piece of impropriety; to Militona it meant despair. Was this how he was to reward her for her noble confession of love in face of imminent danger? Was he not bound to protect the girl henceforth against Juancho's fury? — for the man might try again and renew his violence.

Andrès turned all these and many other points over in his mind, and while he reflected he kept looking at Militona, who was at work, seated by the window; for, once the excitement of the first moments had subsided, she had resumed her laborious life.

A warm, pure light enveloped her caressingly, and shimmered in bluish gleams upon the bandeaux of her magnificent hair, coiled in a tress upon the back of her head, a carnation, fastened in near the temple, flashing on its ebon hue like a red spark. She looked most attractive thus seen, and a bit of blue sky, against which showed the foliage of the pot of sweet-basil, alone since its companion had been cast into the street on the night of the note, formed a background for her lovely face.

The quail and the cricket sang alternately, and a light breeze, scented by the odorous plant, wafted a faint, sweet aroma into the room.

Andrès felt the charm of the room itself, with its whitewashed walls adorned with a few gaudily coloured popular pictures, but which was illuminated by Militona's presence. Its chaste indigence, its maidenly simplicity were pleasant to the soul; for innocent and proud poverty is poetical. A charming being really needs so little.

When Andrès compared this simple chamber to Doña Feliciana's pretentious apartment, which was in such bad taste, the clock, the curtains, the statuettes, and the little dogs of his betrothed struck him as more ridiculous than ever before.

A silvery tinkling was heard in the street. It was the flock of milch-goats passing along and making their bells tinkle.

"There 's my breakfast coming along," gaily said Militona, as she laid down her work upon the table. "I must go down to intercept it. To-day I shall buy a larger quantity, since there are two of us and the physician allows you to take some nourishment."

"You will not find me a difficult guest to feed," said Andrès, smiling.

"That is all very fine; eating makes you hungry, when the milk is pure and the bread white, and my tradesmen do not cheat me."

So saying, she vanished, humming under her breath the refrain of an old song, but returned in a few minutes, her cheeks rosy and her breath short, on account of having ascended rapidly the steps of the steep staircase, and holding in her hand a jug filled with foaming milk.

"I hope, sir, I did not leave you alone too long, but there are eighty steps to go down and to come up afterwards, which is worse."

"You are as quick and lively as a bird, and the dark stair must have looked like Jacob's ladder just now."

"What do you mean?" asked Militona, quite guilelessly and not aware that Andrès was paying her a compliment.

"I mean that an angel was going down," answered Andrès, drawing one of Militona's hands to his lips, as she divided the milk into two cups.

"Come, you flatterer, eat and drink your share; you shall not have a bit more, even were you to call me an archangel."

She held out to him a brown cup, half-full, with a small piece of that delicious, close, even, dazzlingly white bread which is to be had in Spain only.

"It is poor fare for you, my friend, but since you choose to put on the dress of a man of the people, you must even put up with the sort of breakfast that he whose dress you wore would have. It will teach you not to go disguising yourself any more."

While speaking she was blowing off the light foam that topped her cup, and sipping the milk. A pretty white line showing above her red lip indicated the point reached by the milk.

"And by-the-bye," she added, "now that you are allowed to speak, you have to explain to me how it comes that after seeing you at the Plaza de Toros, in a tight-fitting frock-coat, and dressed in the latest Parisian fashion, I came to find you in front of my door in a manolo costume. Which was the disguise, the dress you wore there or the one you wore here? Although I am not much acquainted with the world, I fancy that the aspect in which I first saw you was the real one. Your little white hands that have never worked go to prove it."

"You are right, Militona. It was the desire to see

you again and the fear of bringing danger upon you that caused me to put on the jacket, sash, and hat, for my ordinary dress would too speedily have attracted attention to me in this neighbourhood. With the other costume on, I was but a unit in the crowd, and no eye but that of a jealous lover could have recognised me."

"Or that of one who loved you," returned Militona, blushing. "Your disguise did not deceive me for one moment. I had thought that what I said to you at the bull-fight would prevent your trying to see me again; I hoped it would, for I foresaw the trouble that has since befallen you; yet I should have been sorry had you really obeyed me."

"And may I ask a few questions about that terrible Juancho?"

"Did I not tell you, when his knife was drawn against me, that I loved you? Was not that answering all your questions before they were put?" returned the girl, looking at Andrès with her great innocent eyes, and her face radiant with sincerity.

Whatever doubts might have existed in his mind concerning the relations between the torero and the girl vanished into thin air.

"Besides, my dear patient, if it will give you the least pleasure, I can tell you his story and mine in a few words. Let me begin with my own. My father, an obscure soldier, was killed during the Civil War while heroically fighting for the cause he believed to be the best. His great deeds would be sung by poets had they taken place on some famous battle-field instead of in a narrow mountain gorge in the sierras of Aragon. My dear mother was unable to survive the loss of her beloved husband, and I was left an orphan at the age of thirteen, with no other relative in the world than Aldonza, who, being poor herself, could not help me very much.

"Nevertheless, as my needs are small, I managed to make my living by the work of my hands under the kindly Spanish sky that feeds its children with sunshine and light. My greatest extravagance was to go, on Mondays, to the bull-fights; for we girls who have not, like society young ladies, reading, music, the theatre, and evening parties, we love those simple and grand exhibitions in which man's courage triumphs over the blind impetuosity of brutes. It was there that Juancho saw me and conceived for me a mad love and frantic passion. In spite of his

manly beauty, his brilliant costumes, and his superhuman exploits, he never inspired me with any feeling in his favour. Whatever he did increased my aversion instead of inclining me towards him.

"Still, he worshipped me so devotedly that I often thought it was ungrateful of me not to return his love, but love is independent of our will, and God sends it to us when He pleases. Observing that I did not care for him, Juancho became suspicious and jealous; he wearied me with his pertinacious attentions; he kept watch over me, spied upon me, and was always on the look-out for imaginary rivals. I had to be careful of where I looked and of what I said, for a single word, a single look sufficed for Juancho to pick some dreadful quarrel. He caused me to live in solitude, and placed me in the centre of a circle of terror through which ere long no one dared break."

"But which I have broken for ever, I trust; for I fancy he is not likely to return now."

"Not very soon at least, for he must be in hiding, to escape arrest, until you are well again. But you yourself, who are you? It is high time I asked, is it not?"

"My name is Andrès de Salcedo. I am rich enough to do that only which seems to me worthy of a man of honour, and I am not dependent on any one."

"But you are surely engaged to some lovely, rich, and well dressed girl?" said Militona, with anxious curiosity.

Andrès would have preferred not to lie, yet it was not easy for him to own the truth, so he made an evasive reply. Militona did not press the matter, but she turned pale and became thoughtful.

"Could you manage to get me a pen and a scrap of paper? I should like to write to some friends of mine whom my disappearance must have rendered anxious, and reassure them as to my fate."

The girl succeeded in discovering, in the recesses of a drawer, an old sheet of letter paper, a twisted pen, and an ink bottle in which the dried up fluid formed a sort of coating of lacquer. A few drops of water restored its pristine fluidity to the ink and Andrès managed to scribble on his knees the following note, addressed to Don Geronimo Vasquez de los Rios:

"My dear Father-in-law to be, — Do not worry over my disappearance. An accident, which

entails no serious consequences, detains me for a time in the house where I was taken. I hope, in the course of a few days, to present my respects to Doña Feliciana."

"Andrès de Salcedo."

This very Machiavelian letter gave neither the address of the house nor any particulars, so that the writer might later on colour, as need might require, the circumstances of the case. It would suffice to quiet the uneasiness of the old gentleman and Feliciana, and enable Andrès — who was not aware that Don Geronimo was so well posted, thanks to the sagacity displayed by Argamasilla and Covachuelo — to gain time.

Tia Aldonza took the letter to the post, and Andrès, his mind at ease on this point, gave himself up unreservedly to the sweet and poetic sensations inspired in him by the poor chamber which Militona's presence enriched.

He felt the mighty and pure delight of true love, which is not the result of any social convention, which is unstained by the flattery of self-love, the pride of conquest, and the fancies of the imagination,

— the love which springs from the happy union of youth, beauty, and innocence, that sublime trinity.

According to the dilettanti of love, — who sip it, as they do an ice, and wait, in order to appreciate it the more, until it has melted away, — Militona's outspoken avowal ought to have deprived Andrès of many fine shades, of many delicate gradations, by its wild suddenness. A woman of the world would have spent six months in preparing the effect of the words, but then Militona was not a woman of the world.

Don Geronimo, on the receipt of Andrès' letter, carried it to his daughter, and said very jubilantly : —

" Here, Feliciana, is a letter from your betrothed."

IX

FELICIANA took the paper handed her by her father with a very disdainful look, observed that it was not cream-laid, and said: —

"A letter without an envelope and sealed with a wafer! What very bad form! I suppose I shall have to overlook it in consideration of the peculiar circumstances. Poor Andrès! To think he has not even a stick of sealing-wax at his disposal, or any decent letter-paper. He must be very unhappy. Did you ever see such a rag as that, Sir Edward?" added she, as she passed the letter, after perusing it, to the young gentleman of the Prado, who had become an assiduous visitor to the house since Andrès had disappeared.

"By Jove!" returned the islander, struggling with the Spanish speech; "Australian Bushmen can turn out better stuff than that. This is the crudest sort of paper, and in London it would not be used to wrap up penny-dips even."

"Speak English, Sir Edward," said Feliciana; "you know that I understand it."

"No, I had rather perfect myself in Spanish, which is your tongue."

This compliment made Feliciana smile sweetly, for she rather liked Sir Edward. Much more than Andrès did he realise her idea of elegance and comfort; he was, if not the most civil, at least the most civilised of men. Whatever he wore was made by the latest and most improved processes. Every one of his garments was "improved" and cut out of patent waterproof and fireproof cloth. He carried a pocket-knife that was also a razor, a cork-screw, a spoon, a fork, and a drinking-cup; a flint and steel that included wax vestas, an ink-bottle, wafers, and a stick of sealing-wax; his canes could be transformed into chairs, umbrellas, tent-poles, and even canoes, if the need arose for one, and he had innumerable other inventions of the sort enclosed in compartment boxes such as are carried about, from the Pole to the Equator, by the sons of perfidious Albion, who need more implements than anybody else in order to struggle through life.

If Feliciana could have seen the gentleman's dressing-table, she would have been hopelessly overcome. The united cases of a surgeon, a dentist, and a pedicure contain fewer steel instruments of strange and alarming

shape. In spite of his attempts at "high life," Andrès had always remained far short of such sublimity.

"Suppose we go and call on dear Andrès, father? Sir Edward might come with us, and it would thus be less formal, for, although I am engaged to him, the mere fact of calling on a young man offends propriety, or at least savours of riskiness."

"What possible harm can there be in it, since Sir Edward and I will be with you?" answered Don Geronimo, who could not help thinking his daughter rather prudish. "For the matter of that, if you think it would not be proper for you to go to see Don Andrès, I can go alone, and I will bring you back the most detailed account of him."

"No, one must be prepared to make some sacrifices in favour of those one loves," replied Feliciana, who was not sorry to have the opportunity of seeing things for herself.

Señorita Vasquez, though a well brought-up young lady, was a woman, and the thought that her lover — though her attachment to him was but slight — was in the house of a manola reported to be pretty, troubled her more than she cared to confess to herself even. The most dried-up feminine heart always has some

chord that vibrates when touched by self-love and jealousy.

Without quite understanding why, Feliciana dressed herself in a way that was most striking and quite out of place under the circumstances. Foreseeing a rivalry, she got herself up from head to foot in the finest armour she could find in the arsenal of her wardrobe; not that with her bourgeois disdain of a mere manola she feared for a moment to be surpassed by her, but she instinctively desired to crush her by the exhibition of her splendour, and to fill Andrès with admiration and love. She selected a straw-coloured gros de Naples bonnet, which caused her fair hair and colourless face to look deader than usual, an apple-green cape, trimmed with white lace, which she put on over a sky-blue gown; lilac shoes, and black net gloves stitched with blue. A pink sunshade, trimmed with lace, and a bag heavily embroidered with steel beads completed her get-up. Not a seamstress or a maid but would have said to her : —

"You are beautifully dressed, Señorita."

Consequently, when she took a last look at herself in her mirror, she smiled with satisfaction, for never had she looked more like a plate in a fashion paper without subscribers.

Sir Edward, who gave his arm to Feliciana, was dressed just as foppishly. His hat had a very narrow brim, the tails of his coat were very short, his vest was of a loud check pattern, his shirt collar stuck up very high, and his "improved moreen foundation" satin cravat formed a fit companion costume for the magnificence displayed by Don Geronimo's daughter. Never had a better-matched couple walked side by side. They were made for each other and their admiration was mutual.

The Calle del Povar was reached, not without many a grumble on Feliciana's part concerning the wretched state of the paving, the narrowness of the streets, and the gloomy look of the buildings, the young Englishman sympathising with her and praising the broad stone and asphalt pavements, the wide streets, and the regular buildings of his native city.

"What!" said Feliciana, with infinite disgust, "is it in front of this hovel that Don Andrès was picked up disguised and wounded? What was he doing in such a horrid place?"

"I suppose," replied the young knight, in his Hispano-British lingo, "that he was studying the manners of the people or wanted to try his skill with the knife, just as,

in London, I get into rows in the Temple or Cheapside to have the chance of trying a new facer."

"We shall soon know the truth of the matter," added Don Geronimo.

The three visitors entered the alley-way of the unfortunate house that excited Feliciana's contempt, though it held a treasure such as one might often look for in vain in the finest mansions. Feliciana picked up her skirts as she proceeded, and when she reached the stairs, shuddered at the thought of touching the greasy hand-rope with her spotless kid glove. She therefore asked Sir Edward to again give her his arm.

An officious neighbour led the way, and the perilous ascent began.

When Don Geronimo had answered, *Gente de paz* ("Peaceful visitors"), to the startled inquiry of tia Aldonza, who was in a constant state of terror since Juancho's outburst, the door opened and Andrès, already disquieted by the accents of the well-known voice, beheld first Sir Edward, who formed the vanguard, then Don Geronimo, and finally Feliciana, in all the luxury of her ultra-pretentious toilet.

She had reserved herself as the crowning glory of the surprise, either because she instinctively appreciated

gradation in effects, or because she feared to overwhelm too suddenly dear Andrès with a happiness beyond his strength to bear, or because she did not consider it proper to enter first into a room where a young man was lying in bed. But her entrance failed to produce the dramatic sensation she had reckoned on. Not only was Andrès not dazzled, not only did he not appear to be whelmed by the deepest happiness, not only did he not shed tears of emotion at the thought of the superhuman sacrifice involved in ascending three pairs of stairs accomplished in his favour by so much dressed-up a young lady, but actually his features were overspread with an unmistakable expression of annoyance.

The sensation was the deadest of failures.

At the sight of the three visitors, Militona had risen and offered one of her two chairs to Don Geronimo, with the respectful deference invariably shown by a modest maiden to an old man, and she signed to tia Aldonza to offer the other to Señorita Vasquez. The latter, having pulled up the skirt of her sky-blue gown as if she were afraid of soiling it, let herself fall upon the cane seat, gasped, and fanned herself with her handkerchief.

"Well!" she said, "you *are* high up. I thought I should never have breath enough to get up here."

"The Señorita laces too tightly, perhaps," put in Militona, with an air of perfect simplicity.

Though Feliciana was thin, she did lace as tightly as she could, and replied in the sneering tone women know how to adopt in such circumstances,—

"I never lace tight."

There was no mistake that matters were going wrong from the start, and that the society girl was getting the worst of it. Militona, in her black silk dress, cut in the Spanish fashion, her pretty arms bare, and a flower in her hair, made the bad taste and over-richness of Feliciana's dress appear still more ridiculous. Señorita Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios looked like an English lady's-maid got up in her Sunday best, and Militona like a duchess desirous of preserving her incognito.

To make up for the check she had suffered, Don Geronimo's daughter attempted to disconcert the manola by looking at her with supreme disdain, but she failed to produce any effect, and had at last to lower her eyes before the clear and modest glance of the work-girl.

"What can that woman be?" Militona asked herself. "Can she be Andrès' sister? That is not pos-

sible, for she would be like him and would not look so insolent."

"Well, Andrès," said Don Geronimo, drawing nearer the bed, and speaking affectionately, "you have had a narrow escape. How are you feeling now?"

"Fairly well, thanks to this young lady's care."

"We shall take care that she is suitably rewarded for her pains," put in Feliciana. "She shall have a gold watch, a ring, or other piece of jewellery, as she prefers."

Militona, thus challenged, looked so naturally regal and so haughtily majestic, that Señorita Vasquez felt quite put out, her sweet remark having been intended to bring the lovely creature down from the pedestal of her beauty.

Sir Edward could not refrain from uttering a "She is a very pretty girl," quite forgetting that Feliciana understood English.

Andrès replied in a dry tone, —

"Services such as this young lady has rendered me cannot be paid for."

"Of course not," said Don Geronimo, "and no one dreams of doing so. But she ought to have some token of our gratitude."

"You must be very uncomfortable here, dear Andrès," went on Señorita Vasquez, taking in at a glance all that was lacking in the humble room.

"Don Andrès has been good enough to make no complaints," returned Militona as she withdrew to the window, as if to leave Feliciana free to be impertinent, and to say to her tacitly: "You are in my house, and so I do not turn you out; I may not do so, but I do draw the line between my patience as your hostess and your insults."

Feliciana began to feel embarrassed, and tapped her shoe with the end of her parasol.

There was a moment of silence.

Don Geronimo fished out from the corner of his snuff-box a pinch of *polvo sevillano* (yellow snuff), which he applied to his venerable nose with an easy gesture that smacked of the good old days.

Sir Edward, in order to avoid taking sides, assumed so perfect an air of stupidity that it might well have been natural.

Tia Aldonza, her eyes wide open, her mouth agape, was admiring with her whole soul Feliciana's astounding dress. The loud combination of sky-blue, yellow, pink, apple-green, and lilac filled her with simple-

minded amazement. Never had she been so close to such splendour.

As for Andrès, he cast a deep look of love and protection upon Militona, who was standing at the other end of the room, radiant with beauty. He wondered he could ever have thought of marrying Feliciana, for he now saw her as she really was: an artificial creature turned out by a boarding-school mistress and a fashionable dressmaker.

Militona was saying to herself:

"It is very strange. I have never hated any one, but as soon as that woman entered the room, I felt a thrill, as if an unknown foe were approaching. Yet I have nothing to fear. I am quite sure that Andrès is not in love with her; I can see it in his eyes. She is not pretty and she is a fool, else she would not have come got up like that to call upon a sick man in a lowly house. A sky-blue gown and an apple-green cape! What lack of taste! I hate her, the tall, gawky thing. What does she come here for? To get hold of her betrothed, no doubt, for she must be engaged to him, though Andrès did not breathe a word of it to me. Oh! how wretched I should be if he married her! But he will not; it is impossible.

She has ugly fair hair and she is freckled, and Andrès told me he cared only for black hair and a clear complexion."

Feliciana, meanwhile, was also making remarks to herself. She was analysing Militona's beauty with the liveliest desire to find some flaw in it, but, to her great regret, she failed to do so. Women, like poets, appreciate their own worth fully, and know their own strength, though they will never acknowledge it. Her ill temper increased, and she said rather sourly to poor Andrès:

"Unless your physician has forbidden you to talk, you might tell us how you came to this pass, for we have had only a mixed-up account of your adventure."

"Do try to tell us your romantic story," said the Englishman.

"You want him to talk, but you see he is still very weak," said Don Geronimo, with fatherly kindness.

"It will not tire him very much, and at need this young lady can help him out; she must be acquainted with the whole business."

Thus addressed Militona approached her visitors.

"I took a fancy," said Andrès, "to disguise myself as a manolo in order to wander through the old quarters and to enjoy the bright bustle of the wine-shops

and the public dance-rooms; for, as you are aware, Feliciana, while I admire civilisation I love our old Spanish customs. As I was passing through this street, I came upon a savage serenader, who picked a quarrel with me and wounded me with his knife, in a perfectly fair fight and without any treachery. I fell, and this young lady picked me up half-dead on the threshold of the house-door."

"Why, Andrès, that is very romantic, and it would make a capital subject for a ballad if it were a little bit improved upon. Two angry rivals meet under the balcony of a fair lady," — as she spoke she looked at Militona and laughed an ugly, forced laugh. "They smash their guitars over each other's heads and slash each other's faces. The scene, engraved on wood for a frontispiece to the ballad, would be uncommonly effective. It would make any blind man rich."

"Madam," said Militona, "if the blow had been an eighth of an inch lower, it would have gone through his heart."

"I dare say, but as is always the case, the blade slipped so as to inflict an interesting wound only."

"Which does not interest you much, at all events," retorted the girl.

"It was not received in my honour, and I cannot therefore feel as deeply about it as you do. Nevertheless, you see that I have come to call upon your patient. If you like, we can nurse him in turns; it would be quite delightful."

"I have nursed him alone until now, and I shall continue to do so," replied Militona.

"I recognise that by comparison with you I may seem cold; but then I am not in the habit of taking young men into my room, even when they have their breast a little bit scored."

"You would have let him die in the street for fear of compromising yourself?"

"We are not all so free as you; we have to think of consequences, for those of us who have a character would be sorry to lose it."

"Come, come, Feliciana; you are talking nonsense, and getting angry about nothing," said Don Geronimo, seeking to smooth matters over. "All that has happened has been unforeseen. Andrès never saw this young lady before his accident occurred. Do not turn jealous and get things into your head without any reason."

"A betrothed is not a mistress," went on Feli-

ciana, majestically, without heeding her father's remarks.

Militona turned pale at this crowning insult. Her eyes grew moist, her bosom heaved, her lips swelled, and she choked down a sob, but she mastered herself, and replied only with a look of crushing contempt.

"Let us go, father; I have no business to be here. I cannot stay longer in the home of an abandoned woman."

"If that is your only reason for leaving, Señorita, stay," said Andrès, taking Militona's hand in his. "Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios need not cut short her visit to Señora Andrès de Salcedo, whom I beg to introduce you to. I should never forgive myself if I were the cause of your being rude."

"What is that, Andrès?" exclaimed Don Geronimo. "And your marriage settled ten years ago! You must be crazy."

"On the contrary, I am quite sensible," replied the young fellow. "I could never have made your daughter happy."

"Nonsense; you are off your head; you are ill and feverish," went on Geronimo, who had accustomed himself to look upon Andrès as his son-in-law.

"Do not worry," put in the Englishman, pulling Don Geronimo by the sleeve. "You will never want for sons-in-law, for your daughter is so beautiful and dresses so well."

"You were so well matched in the way of money," went on Don Geronimo.

"Better than in the way of hearts," returned Andrès. "I do not think Señorita Vasquez will greatly regret me."

"How modest of you!" retorted Feliciana. "Well, to relieve you of any remorse you might feel, I shall let you believe that. Farewell; may your married life be happy, Madam. I wish you good-day."

Militona returned Feliciana's ironical nod with a dignified bow.

"Come, father. Sir Edward, your arm."

The Englishman, thus called upon, gracefully rounded his arm like the handle of an amphora, and they went out most majestically.

The young Briton was delighted. What had just occurred allowed hopes which he had hitherto choked down to spring up in his breast. Feliciana, whom he discreetly loved, was free! The long projected match was broken off.

"Oh!" said he to himself, as he felt on his sleeve the girl's gloved hand, "it has always been my dream to marry a Spaniard, a Spaniard with a passionate, ardent heart, who would make my tea as I like it. I am of Lord Byron's opinion: 'Away with the pale beauties of the North!' I have sworn I would never marry any one but a Hindoo, an Italian, or a Spaniard. I prefer a Spaniard on account of the Romancero and the War of Independence. I have met many who were ardent, but they did not make tea the way I like; indeed, they committed unpardonable solecisms. But Feliciana is so well brought-up! What a sensation she will make in London, at Almack's and at fashionable routs! No one will believe that she comes from Madrid. Won't I be happy! We shall spend the summers with the children at Calcutta or at the Cape, where I have a cottage. It will be splendid!"

Such were the golden dreams Sir Edward dreamed as he escorted Señorita Vasquez to her home.

Feliciana herself was indulging in reflections of a similar character. Of course she felt much annoyed on account of what had just happened; not that she greatly regretted Andrès, but she was angered at having been forestalled. It is always unpleasant to be forsaken

by a man, even when one does not care for him, and since she had made the acquaintance of Sir Edward, Feliciana had looked upon her engagement to Andrès in a less favourable light. Having found in Sir Edward the personification of her ideal, she perceived that she had never loved Andrès.

Sir Edward was absolutely the sort of Englishman she had dreamed of. Clean-shaven, rosy, fresh, well brushed, well combed, well groomed, with a white neck-tie on from early morning; an Englishman in a water-proof and mackintosh; the highest expression of civilisation!

Then he was so punctual, so correct, so mathematically on time in his calls. No chronometer could surpass him in this respect.

"What a happy life one could lead with such a man," said Señorita Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios to herself. "I should have English plate, Wedgwood ware, carpets all through the house, and servants with powdered hair. I should drive in a four-in hand in Hyde Park with my husband, and at night, at the Theatre-Royal, I should listen to Italian music from a box lined with buttercup damask. Deer would roam about on the lawn of our country seat, and perhaps,

too, rosy, fair-haired children. Children look very well on the back seat of a carriage, with a thorough-bred King Charles spaniel by them."

Let us leave these two beings, so well calculated to appreciate each other, to go on their way, and return to the Calle del Povar to Andrès and Militona.

The girl, after the departure of Feliciana, Don Geronimo, and Sir Edward, had thrown herself on Andrès' neck with a burst of happiness and tears; but they were tears of joy and delight, that streamed gently down in transparent pearls upon her beauteous downy cheeks without reddening her divine eyelids.

The day was sinking, and the sunset sky was dappled with pretty rosy clouds. In the distance was heard the strumming of guitars, the rumble of tambourines played by the dancers, and the rattle of the castanets. The "Ay!" and "Ola!" of the stanzas of the farandola came in harmonious bursts from all the street corners and crossings, and all these joyous national sounds formed a sort of faint epithalamium for the happiness of the two lovers. Night was now fallen, and still Militona's head rested on Andrès' shoulder.

X

I HAVE rather lost sight of friend Juancho, and it would only be right to look after him, for he left Militona's room in such a state of exasperation that it bordered on frenzy. Cursing and gesticulating wildly, he had reached, without being aware of where he was going, the Hierro Gate, and had wandered out into the country.

The environs of Madrid are bare and desolate; the walls of the wretched buildings scattered along the roadside are of an earthen colour, and in these buildings are carried on such unpleasant and unhealthy businesses as are excluded from large cities. The bare ground is strewn with bluish rocks that grow larger the nearer one approaches to the foot of the Sierra de Guademarra, the summits of which, still covered with snow at the beginning of summer, show in the distance like small dappled clouds. Scarcely any trace of vegetation is visible. The dried-up torrent-beds make hideous cicatrices in the ground, while the hills and slopes, destitute of verdure, compose a landscape quite

in harmony with melancholy feelings. Gaiety would be silenced out there, but despair, at least, feels it is safe from raillery.

After walking for an hour or two, Juancho, borne down by stress of thought, he who would not have bowed under the weight of the gates of Gaza that Samson carried off, threw himself by the side of a ditch, leaned on his elbows, holding his chin and cheeks in his hands, and remained motionless in a condition of absolute prostration.

He watched, without seeing them, the long line of chariots passing by; the oxen, which, frightened by the body they saw lying on the roadside, would shy as they passed him and be touched up with the driver's goad in return; the asses, laden with straw fastened with wicker bands; banditti-looking peasants, proudly bestriding their horses, one hand on the hip and a rifle on the saddle-bow; grim peasant-women, dragging along a crying child; old Castilians, wearing their wolf-skin helmets; men of La Mancha, in black breeches and milled stockings; and all the wandering population that, within a radius of ten miles, brings to market three green apples or a bunch of pimento.

Juancho was suffering atrociously, and tears, the first he had ever shed, were falling down his brown cheeks to the careless earth, that drank them up as though they were mere rain-drops. His mighty chest, swelled by deep sighs, made his whole body heave. Never had he been so unhappy; the world seemed to be coming to an end; he saw no purpose in the world or in life. What was he to do henceforth?

"She does not love me, she loves another man," he kept on repeating to himself, as he tried to demonstrate to himself the fatal truth his heart would not believe in. "Can it be possible? Can it be credible? She, so proud, so shy, to have suddenly fallen madly in love with a stranger, while I, who have been living but for her, who have followed her for two years like her own shadow, I cannot get from her a single word of pity, a single smile of indulgence! I thought I was to be pitied before, but it was paradise in comparison with what I am suffering now. If she did not love me, at least she loved no one else.

"I could see her; she would tell me to go, never to return, that I annoyed her, wearied her, haunted her, that she could no longer put up with my tyrannical ways; but at least, when I did go she was alone. At

night I wandered under her windows, mad with desire and drunk with love, but I knew that she was sleeping chastely in her virgin couch; I had not to dread seeing another shadow than hers upon her curtain. I was wretched, but I enjoyed this much consolation, that no one else was more fortunate than I. The treasure was not mine, but no one else had the key to it.

"But now it is all over; all hope is gone. She repulsed me when she did not love any one; what will it be now her repulsion for me is increased by all her passion for another? Ah! I know too well! That was why I was so careful to drive away every man who was attracted by her beauty. Right good watch did I keep upon her. I settled poor Luca and poor Ginès, though they had done nothing, and I let that other fellow get by me, my real rival, the dangerous one, whom I ought to have killed. Be punished, unskilful hand, stupid slave that couldst not do thy duty!"

And he bit his right hand so hard that he nearly made it bleed.

"Once he is cured, I shall challenge him again, and I shall not miss him this time. But if I kill him Militona will never look upon me again! In any case

she is lost to me. It is enough to drive a man crazy, for there is no way out of it. If he could only die a natural death in some unexpected catastrophe, be burned up in a fire, be crushed under a falling wall, be swallowed up by an earthquake, fall a victim to the plague! But there is no such luck for me. Hell and damnation! to think that her lovely soul, her perfect body, her glorious eyes, her heavenly smile, her round and supple neck, her taper waist, her tiny foot, all, all are his! He is allowed to take her hand, and she does not withdraw it; he can bend her adored head to his, and she does not turn away with disdain. What have I done that I should be punished so cruelly? There are so many handsome girls in Spain who would ask no better than to see me at their feet! When I step into the bull-ring, more than one heart flutters within a lovely bosom, more than one fair hand sends me friendly greeting. How many girls in Seville, in Madrid, in Granada, carried away by admiration for my courage and my handsome mien, have thrown me their fans, their handkerchiefs, the flower from their hair, the golden necklace from their neck. Well, I would have none of them. I cared only for her who would none of me. Of all the loves proffered me I chose

the one hate. Oh! invincible attraction! oh! fatal destiny! Poor Rosaura, who bore me such simple love, which I did not return, madman that I was, how you must have suffered! No doubt I am now bearing the penalty of the pain I caused you. The world is all out of joint. Love should produce love, and then no one would suffer. God is cruel! It may be because I did not burn candles before the image of Our Lady that these misfortunes have befallen me. Oh! God in heaven! what shall I do? Never shall I know a moment's peace on earth. Lucky was Dominguez to be slain by the bull, for he also loved Militona; and yet I did all I could to save him. Then she accused me of forsaking him in his peril, for not only does she hate me, she despises me. It is enough to drive me mad!"

Thus speaking, he sprang up and wandered on through the fields.

He walked on the whole day, crazy, haggard, with fists clenched. Cruel hallucinations showed him Andrès and Militona strolling together, hand in hand, embracing each other, looking languorously at each other, in every way that could most cause a jealous heart to suffer. He saw these things in such vivid colours,

so strikingly real, that more than once he leapt forward to stab Andrès, but his knife met the void only, and he awoke from his dream in amazement.

The shapes of objects were growing blurred to his sight; his temples were throbbing; his brow seemed to be pressed with an iron band; his eyes were burning; and he felt cold although the sweat was pouring off his face in the June sunshine.

An ox-driver, whose cart had upset, the wheel having passed over a big stone, tapped him on the shoulder and said: —

"Look here, you look as if you were strong in the arms. Will you not help me to get my cart up again? my poor oxen have tried in vain."

Juancho approached, and without a word started to lift the cart up, but his hands trembled, his legs gave way under him, and his unconquered muscles refused to perform their office. He managed to lift the cart a little way, and then, breathless, exhausted, let it fall back.

"You looked to me as if you were stronger than you are," said the ox-driver, astonished at Juancho's lack of success.

But Juancho's strength was gone. The man was ill.

Nevertheless, stung by the driver's remark, and proud of his muscles like the true gladiator he was, he collected, by a tremendous effort of the will, all the strength he had left, and tried again furiously. The cart was up on its wheels as by magic, the driver not having had to help, and the shock was so violent that the vehicle nearly turned over on the other side.

"Well, you are a rare one!" cried the astounded driver. "Since the days of the Ocaña Hercules, who carried off the gratings of windows, and of Bernardo da Capio, who stopped mill-wheels with his finger, there has been no one to compare with you."

But Juancho did not reply, and fell in a swoon on the road, as falls a dead body, to recall Dante's turn.

"Can he have burst a blood-vessel?" said the driver, frightened. "No matter; since it was while assisting me that he has met with this accident, I shall put him on my cart and leave him in some inn at San Agostino or Alcobendas."

Juancho soon recovered from his swoon, although neither salts nor spirits were used to bring him to, ox-drivers generally being ill provided with such things. But then the torero was no boarding-school miss.

The driver threw his mantle over him; Juancho was in a high fever, and he was experiencing a sensation hitherto unknown to him: he was ill. On reaching the posada de San Agostino, he asked for a bed and lay down.

He slept a dead sleep, the invincible sleep that seizes upon Redskins' prisoners in the midst of the tortures inflicted upon them by the ingenious cruelty of their victors, and which comes upon the condemned to death on the morning of their execution. When the organs are broken they will not supply the soul with the power to suffer.

It was his remaining unconscious for twelve hours that saved Juancho from going mad. At the end of that time he got up; the fever had left him and he had no headache, but he was as weak as if he were convalescing after a six months' illness. The ground seemed to give way under his feet, the light dazed him, the least sound deafened him. He felt his mind a blank and his soul a void. A great breaking up had taken place in him; where had been his love was now a great gulf fixed that nothing henceforth could fill up.

He remained a whole day in the inn; then, feeling better, for his energetic constitution was reasserting

itself, he ordered a horse and proceeded to Madrid, drawn by the strange instinct that drags one back to a painful spectacle. He felt the need of pouring venom into his wounds, of making them larger, of turning the knife himself in his own heart. He was too far removed from his sorrow, and wanted to get closer to it, to fulfil his martyrdom in its entirety, to intoxicate himself with it, to forget the cause of his sufferings by carrying them to excess.

While Juancho was wandering round in his grief, alguazils were searching for him in every direction, for the common voice named him as the man who had stabbed Don Andrès de Salcedo. The latter, of course, had made no charge: it was enough that he should have taken from poor Juancho the girl he loved, without depriving him of liberty also. Andrès was not even aware that a warrant was out against Juancho.

Argamasilla and Covachuelo, the Orestes and Pylades of the police force, had started out with the intention of discovering and arresting Juancho, but they set about their job with infinite care, in view of the notoriously savage habits of that personage. It might even have been believed, and indeed there were men who coveted

the appointments of the two friends who declared it openly, that Covachuelo and Argamasilla made the minutest inquiries with a view to avoiding the man they were commissioned to arrest. A stupid spy, however, reported, as coolly as if his conscience were quite clear, that he had seen the culprit enter the Plaza de Toros. There was no help for it, the job had to be done.

While on their way to the spot, Argamasilla said to his friend:

"I pray and beseech you, Covachuelo, not to be imprudent and to moderate your heroic impulses. You know that the fellow is quick with his knife, so do not expose the life of the greatest detective that ever lived to the mad fury of a brute."

"Fear nothing," answered Covachuelo, "I shall do my best to preserve your friend to you. I shall display my courage only at the last extremity when all other means have failed."

Juancho had indeed entered the bull-ring, in order to have a look at the bulls that had been brought in for the morrow's fight, and this more by force of habit than in pursuance of any set purpose.

He was still there, and crossing the arena, when

Argamasilla and Covachuelo turned up with their little squad. Covachuelo, with the utmost politeness and in the most ceremonious terms, informed Juancho that he must accompany him to the prison. Juancho shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and went on his way. At a sign from the detective, two men threw themselves on the torero, who shook them off as if they had been grains of dust on his sleeve.

Then the whole crowd dashed at him. Juancho hurled three or four of them a dozen yards away, but as numbers always prevail in the end over mere bodily strength, and a hundred pygmies can overcome a giant, Juancho, raging and fighting, made his way towards the toril, and once there rid himself by an abrupt twist of the men clinging to him, opened the door and dashed within the dangerous place of refuge, in which he shut himself up, very much like the tamer who, being pursued by sheriff's officers, took refuge in the cage in which he kept his tigers.

Juancho's assailants endeavoured to bring him to bay, but the door they were besieging suddenly opened and a bull, driven from its stall by the torero, dashed head down upon the terrified company.

The poor devils had barely time to leap over the barriers, and one of them did not manage to avoid having his trousers torn.

"The devil!" said Argamasilla and Covachuelo, "we shall have to regularly lay siege to him."

"Let us try another assault."

This time two bulls came out together and charged the assailants, but as these dispersed with the speed inspired by fright, the fierce brutes, seeing no other human foes, turned upon each other, locked their horns, dug their noses into the sand, and made desperate efforts to overthrow each other.

Covachuelo, holding carefully on to the door, shouted to Juancho: —

"Look here, my lad, you have five more bulls to let out: we know exactly the quantity of ammunition you have got. When those are out, you will have to surrender, and unconditionally at that. Now, if you will come out of your own accord, I shall take you to jail as pleasantly as I can, in a calesino that you shall pay for, without putting on you handcuffs or thumb-cords, and I shall say nothing of your having resisted the police, a thing that would get you a longer sentence. Can I say more?"

Juancho, not caring to fight longer for freedom, which was indifferent to him, gave himself up to Covachuelo and Argamasilla, who took him to the city prison with all the honours of war.

When the key had turned in the last lock, he cast himself on his bed and said: —

"I have a great mind to kill myself."

He had already forgotten that he was in a cell.

"Yes, I ought to have killed her the day I found Andrès in her room. My vengeance would have been complete, and he would have suffered the most atrocious agony at seeing his mistress stabbed to death under his own eyes, while he himself, powerless, unable to move, was helpless to protect her. I should not have killed him; I should not have been such a fool. Then I would have escaped into the hills or given myself up to justice, but in either case I should have been at peace. She must die if I am to live, or I must die if she is to live. I had my navaja in my hand, too; all that I need have done was to strike one blow and all would have been over, but her eyes flamed out so and she was so desperately beautiful that I lost all power of will, all strength, all courage, — I, who can make lions turn away their eyes when I look

at them and compel bulls to crawl on their bellies like beaten dogs.

"But what? Wound her lovely bosom? Drive the cold steel into her heart and make her glorious red blood stream over her fair skin? No, I could not be so barbarous. Rather stifle her with a pillow, as the negro stifles the Venetian girl in the play I saw at the Teatro del Circo. Yet she has not deceived me, she has never sworn a false oath to me, she has always been despairingly cold to me. Never mind, I love her so madly that I have the right of life and death over her."

Such were the thoughts that crowded in Juancho's brain as he lay in prison.

As for Andrès, he was recovering his strength rapidly; he was now up and, leaning on Militona's arm, had been able to walk round the room and to take the air at the window. Ere long he was well enough to get out and to return home to arrange for his approaching marriage.

Sir Edward, on his part, had made his proposal and formally asked for Feliciana's hand in marriage. Don Geronimo had eagerly given his consent, and Sir Edward was now busy with the wedding presents for his

bride, ordering from London fabulously rich dresses and ornaments in the very worst taste. The Cashmere shawls were of jonquil-yellow, scarlet, and apple-green shades; they had been brought from Lahore, the metropolis of shawls, by Sir Edward himself, for he owned two or three farms in that neighbourhood, and they were made of the hair of his own goats. Feliciana was in raptures.

Militona, although she was very happy, was not quite free from apprehensions. She dreaded feeling out of place in the society to which she would be introduced on her marriage to Andrès. No boarding-school mistress had destroyed the work of God in her case, and education had not replaced instinct. She had the feeling of right, of beauty, of all the poetry that is in art and in nature, but the feeling only. Her lovely hands had never fingered a key-board; she could not read music, though she sang in a true and clear voice; her literary knowledge was confined to a few novels, and the only reason she did not misspell her words was that Spanish orthography is of the simplest.

She would say to herself: "I mean that Andrès shall have no cause to blush for me. I shall study, I shall learn, I shall make myself worthy of him. I sup-

pose I am beautiful, for his eyes tell me that, and as for dresses, I have made enough of them to be able to wear them as well as any fine lady. We shall go to some quiet retreat and stay there until the poor chrysalis has had time to unfold her wings and to change into a butterfly. Oh! I do hope nothing will happen to me! The sky seems too blue and frightens me. What has become of Juancho, I wonder? Can he be planning some desperate attempt?"

"You need not fear that," replied tia Aldonza, for Militona had spoken her last words aloud. "Juancho is in jail, charged with having murdered Don Andrès de Salcedo, and his previous record is likely to make the business go hard with him."

"Poor Juancho! I am sorry for him now. If Andrès did not love me, I should be intensely unhappy."

The fact was that the case against Juancho was looking very black. The prosecuting attorney charged that the nocturnal fight had been nothing less than an ambush and homicide, and that Juancho had slain his victim with malice prepense. From this point of view the matter was serious.

Happily Andrès, thanks to the explanations he was in a position to make, and the trouble he took, succeeded

in proving that the murder had been merely a duel, with weapons, it is true, differing from those used by men of the world, but which he was in a position to accept, since he understood the handling of the navaja. Besides, the wound had proved to be not serious, and in a way he had been to blame for the quarrel. He considered that the outcome had been so fortunate for him that it was not too highly paid for by a stab.

It stands to reason that a charge of murder cannot be long maintained, even by the most bloodthirsty attorney, when the victim is in good health and pleads on behalf of the murderer.

Juancho, therefore, was set free in a short time, with the regret of owing his liberty to the man he hated most on earth, and from whom he would not at any price have accepted a favour.

As he left the prison he said with a sombre look : —

" Now I am bound by that accursed kindness of his. I am a coward, an infamous wretch if I do not hold that man's life sacred henceforth. I would rather have been sent to the galleys for ten years, for when I came back I could have avenged myself."

From that day Juancho disappeared. It was said that he had been seen galloping off on his black horse

in the direction of Andalusia, but what was certain was that he was not again seen in Madrid.

Militona breathed more freely, for she knew Juancho well enough to be aware that nothing more was to be feared from him.

The two weddings took place on the same day in the same church. Militona had insisted on making her own wedding-gown; it was her masterpiece, and looked as if it had been cut out of lilies; it was so well made that nobody paid any attention to it.

Feliciana's dress was extravagantly rich, and when she left the church everybody said, "What a beautiful gown!" and when Militona appeared, "What a lovely girl!"

XI

NOT far from the old San Domingo convent, in the Antequerula quarter in Granada, on the slope of the hill, rose a dazzlingly white house, which shone like a silver block amid the dark-green foliage of the surrounding trees. Over the garden walls overflowed, as from an over-full cup, wildering tendrils of grapes and climbing plants that fell in great sheets on the street side.

Through the railings of the gate was seen first a peristyle, adorned with a mosaic formed of differently coloured pebbles, and next an inner court, a *patio*, as it is technically called, evidently of Moorish architecture.

The patio was surrounded by slender monolithic marble pillars, most gracefully proportioned, on the fanciful Corinthian capitals of which inscriptions in flowery Arabic characters, still showing traces of gilding, were intermingled with the volutes. Upon these capitals rested horse-shoe arches like those of the Alhambra, forming a covered gallery on the four sides of the court.

In the centre, in a basin on the edge of which were set vases of flowers and shrubs in boxes, splashed a light jet of water that scattered pearly drops upon the lustrous leaves, and seemed, with its crystalline voice, to whisper love secrets in the ear of the myrtles and the rose-laurels.

Over the court was stretched a tendido that transformed it into an open-air drawing-room filled with transparent shade and delicious coolness.

On the wall hung a guitar, and on a horse-hair sofa lay a large straw hat trimmed with green ribbons.

Any one passing along the street and casting a glance into the place, however poor an observer he might be, could not have failed to remark that happy people must live there. For happiness lights up homes and gives the houses in which it is found an air that others lack. Walls smile and weep, are joyous or sad, surly or hospitable, according to the character of the inhabitant who is their soul. And it was plain that these were animated by none but young lovers or a newly wedded pair.

The gate not being closed, I shall push it open and enter.

At the back of the patio, another gate, also standing open, led into a garden that was neither French nor

English, but of a kind to be met with in Granada only. It was a regular virgin forest of myrtles, orange and pomegranate trees, rose-laurels, Spanish jasmine, pistachio trees, sycamores, and terebinths, topped by a few century-old cypresses that rose silently into the blue of the heavens like a sorrowful thought in the midst of joy.

Through this wilderness of flowers and scent flashed the silvery waters of the Darro, brought from the summit of the hill by the wonderful hydraulic works due to the Arabs.

Rare plants bloomed in masses in old traceried Moorish vases, most graceful in outline, and adorned with verses from the Koran.

But the most remarkable thing was a walk bordered with laurels, with shining trunks and glossy leaves, down which ran two benches, the seats and backs of which were of marble, and two brooklets whose sparkling waters were confined in alabaster runlets.

At the end of the walk, on which the Andalusian sun could scarce cast a few golden spots through the close network of leaves, rose a small and elegant building, a sort of pavilion, of the kind called *tocador* or *mirador*

in Granada, and from which one enjoyed a vast and picturesque view.

The interior of the mirador was a gem of Moorish carving. The vaulting, which was of the class called *media-naranja* (half of an orange) by the Spaniards, presented such a complication of arabesques and ornaments that it was more like a madrepore or a honeycomb than the result of human labour. It is only in crystal grottoes that one comes upon such a quantity of carven stalactites.

At the back, in the marble setting of the window opening out upon an abyss, was displayed the most superb picture the eye of man could behold. In the foreground, through a wood of huge laurels, the Genil leaped and rushed down from the Sierra, in and out between boulders of marble and porphyry, hastening on to the Darro and Granada. Farther away stretched the rich Vega with its opulent vegetation, and in the very background, but so close that it seemed as if one could touch them, rose the mountains of the Sierra Nevada.

At this moment the sun was setting and flushing the snowy summits with a rose unlike anything on earth: a tender and soft rose, luminous, living, ideal, divine, of

a hue that is to be seen in Granada only, — a rose like the flush on the cheek of the maiden who for the first time hears words of love breathed in her ear.

A young man and a young woman, leaning near each other on the balcony, were admiring the splendid view together. The young man's arm was round the girl's waist, resting there in the security of mutual love.

After a few moments of silent contemplation, the young woman drew herself up and allowed to be seen a lovely face which, as my reader has no doubt guessed, was none other than that of Señora Andrès de Salcedo, or Militona, if the name under which she has been longest known be preferred. I need not add that the young man was Andrès.

Immediately after the wedding ceremony, Andrès and his wife had left for Granada, where the former owned a house bequeathed to him by an uncle. Feliciana had gone to London with Sir Edward; each of the couples thus obeying their instincts: the first seeking sunshine and poetry, the second civilisation and fog.

Militona, as she had said, had made up her mind not to make her appearance at once in the society to which her marriage with Andrès gave her admittance. She feared to disgrace Andrès by her charming ignorance,

and so she had come to forget, in this happy retreat, the artless astonishment of poverty.

She had greatly improved both physically and mentally. Her beauty, which had seemed perfect, had grown greater. Sometimes, in a sculptor's studio, is to be seen an admirable statue that appears to be finished, yet the artist manages to add a new perfection to what was believed to be already perfect. So it was with Militona's beauty; happiness had given her the final touch, and innumerable details in her had become exquisitely delicate, thanks to the refinement and the attentions which wealth makes possible. Her beautifully shaped hands had become white, and the thinness due to work and care for the morrow had filled out. The lines of her lovely body swept in softer curves in all the security that marks the wealthy woman. Her bright disposition blossomed out freely and scattered around its flowers, scents, and fruits. Her virgin mind welcomed everything new and assimilated it with amazing facility, and Andrès enjoyed the pleasure of seeing appear in the woman he loved a woman superior to the one he had first known.

Instead of the disenchantment of possession, he discovered every day in his wife some new quality,

some unsuspected charm, and he congratulated himself on having had the courage to commit what society calls a mistake, — that is, though rich, to have married a pure and admirably beautiful girl who was passionately in love with him.

Should it not be in some sort the duty of rich men to draw from obscurity beautiful virtuous girls, dowerless queens of beauty, and to place them on the golden throne which is their right ?

Nothing was wanting to the happiness of Andrès and Militona. At times, however, she did think of poor Juancho, of whom all trace was lost. She could have wished that her felicity should not have caused sorrow to any one, and her joy was clouded by the thought of the unfortunate man's sufferings.

" No doubt he has forgotten me," she says to herself in the endeavour to deceive herself. " He must have gone into some far off country, far, very far away."

But had Juancho really forgotten Militona ? That was not likely. He was not so far away as the young woman herself fancied, for, at the very moment when she was indulging in the thought, had she looked at the crest of the wall, on the side of the abyss, she would

have seen flashing through the foliage a fixed, phosphorescent gaze like that of a tiger, and she would have recognised it by its glare.

"Shall we go for our walk to the Generalif," said Andrès to her, "and breathe in the bitter scent of the rose-laurels and listen to the shrill call of the peacocks on the cypresses of Zoraida and Binder of Hearts?"

"It is still very hot, dear, and then I am not dressed," replied Militona.

"What do you mean? You look lovely in that white dress, with your coral bracelet and the flower in your hair. Just put on a mantilla, and when you traverse the Alhambra all the old Moorish kings will want to rise up again."

Militona smiled, adjusted the folds of her mantilla, took her fan, the inseparable companion of the Spanish woman, and the two strolled towards the Generalif, which, as is well known, is situated upon a hill connected with that crowned by the red towers of the Alhambra by the most picturesque ravine in the world, through which winds a path bordered by the richest vegetation. Señor and Señora de Salcedo went slowly along under the leafy bower, holding each other's hand and swinging their arms like a pair of children at play.

Behind the trunk of yonder fig-tree, whose dark-green leaves cast a shade as of night over the narrowing path, was that, or was it not, the gleam of a fire-arm, the yellow flash of a blunderbuss?

A man is lying full length among the lentisks and medlars, like a jaguar in wait for its prey, and mentally estimating the length of leap that will carry it on to the victim's back. It is Juancho, who for the past two months has been living in Granada, hidden in the gipsies' troglodyte dens, hollowed out in the escarpments of Monte Sagrado, where are the martyrs' caves. He has grown ten years older in the course of those two months; his complexion has darkened, his cheeks are hollow, and his eyes blazing; he is like a man devoured by a haunting thought — the thought that he must kill Militona.

Twenty times already, for he is constantly prowling around her, invisible, unrecognisable, watching for his chance, he has had opportunities of carrying out his purpose, but always, at the crucial moment, his heart has failed him.

This time, on his way to his ambush, — for he has noticed that every day, at about the same hour, Andrès and Militona pass that way, — he has sworn the most

dreadful oath that he will carry out his murderous intention and be done with the business once for all.

So there he lay, his loaded weapon by his side, watching, listening to the sound of the distant footsteps and at once justifying and encouraging himself by the reflection: —

"She has destroyed my soul; I have the right to destroy her body."

A sound of bright, laughing voices was heard at the end of the walk. Juancho started and turned livid; then he cocked his blunderbuss.

"Would not one say this path led to the terrestrial paradise?" Militona was saying to her husband. "It is so full of flowers and scents, sunbeams and song of birds. When the path is so beautiful one does not care to arrive even at the loveliest spot."

As she spoke she had come abreast of the fatal fig-tree.

"How delightful and cool it is here. I feel so bright and happy."

The muzzle of the invisible blunderbuss was aimed accurately in the direction of her face, that had never been lovelier and more smiling.

"Come, let me not yield to weakness," murmured Juancho, as he put his finger on the trigger. "She is happy, she has just said so, and never was the opportunity more favourable. Let her die with these words."

It was all up with Militona; the muzzle of the weapon, concealed in the foliage, almost touched her ear. In another second the charming head would be blown to pieces, and her beauty resolved into a hideous mingling of bloody flesh and shattered bones. But at the moment of breaking his idol, Juancho's heart swelled, a cloud passed before his eyes. His hesitation lasted but a second, yet it was long enough to save Señora de Salcedo, who never knew the danger she had run, and who finished her stroll through the Generalif in perfect peace of mind.

"Well, there is no doubt that I am a coward," said Juancho as he fled through the brushwood. "I have no courage save in the presence of bulls and men."

Some time afterwards there was much talk of a torero who was a prodigy of skill and valour; never had any one been so rash as he. He gave out that he was from South America, from Lima, and he was just then performing at Puerto de Santa Maria.

Andrès, who happened to be in Cadiz with his wife, having gone there to bid good-bye to a friend leaving for Manila, desired, as was natural in an aficionado, to see this hero of the bull-ring. Militona, gentle and tender-hearted though she was, was not the sort of woman to say nay to such a proposal, and the pair of them went down to the jetty, to take the steamer plying between Cadiz and Puerto, or one of the small craft, with an eye painted on either side the cutwater, so that their bows have a quaint human look.

The harbour-side presented a scene of extraordinary bustle and activity. The masters of the various crafts were fighting for clients and exchanging in turns compliments and insults. Shouts, oaths, and pleasantries passed to and fro between them, and every moment a boat, spreading its lateen sail to the breeze, was borne away like swan's-down over the crystal blue roadstead.

Andrès and Militona seated themselves in the stern of one of these crafts, the skipper of which, as he held out his arm to the young bride in order to assist her on board, hummed gaily a line from the Puerto bull song: —

"Lift that dainty foot of thine!"

Cadiz is wonderfully beautiful seen from the sea, and deserves all the praise lavished upon it in Byron's two stanzas. It looks like a silver city set between two sapphire cupolas; it is the home of lovely women, and it is no small laudation of Militona to say that many gazed after and followed her upon the Alameda.

The truth is she looked lovely in her white lace mantilla, with a rose in her hair, her neckerchief fastened on the shoulders with a couple of cameos, her embroidered bodice, with fringes at the wrists and on the shoulders, her many-flounced skirt, her lace-work stockings, thinner than spiders' webs, setting off her shapely limbs, her pretty satin shoes on the smallest feet in the world, of which, to quote the Spanish song, it might have been said, "If the leg is a reality, the foot is an illusion."

Though she had become rich, Militona had preserved her love for Spanish fashions and customs; she had not turned French or English, and although she had the means to buy as many sulphur-yellow hats as any one in the Peninsula, she did not abuse her opportunities. The dress I have just described proves that she cared very little for Paris fashions.

The crowd, dressed in brilliant colours, for Andalusia has not yet been invaded throughout its length and breadth by sombre black, swarming on the square or sitting down in the Vista Alegre inn and the neighbouring taverns until the bull-fight should begin, presented a bright and most animated spectacle.

Among the mantillas were to be seen the beautiful scarlet shawls covering the head and setting off so well the mat white faces of the women of Puerto de Santa Maria and Xeres de la Frontera. The majos, with a handkerchief hanging out of each of the front pockets of their jackets, were swaggering along and posturing as they leaned on their varas, a sort of forked stick, or exchanged pleasantries in their boneless Andalusian dialect, which is almost wholly composed of vowels.

The hour for the performance was approaching, and every one was wending his way to the arena, telling wonders of the torero, who, if he went on and escaped being gored, would soon surpass Montès himself, for he seemed to be possessed of the devil.

Andrès and Militona sat down in their box, and the bull-fight commenced.

The famous torero was dressed in black; his jacket, embroidered with jet and silk, was of a sombre richness

that harmonised with the wearer's grim and almost sinister face. He wore a yellow sash round his thin hips; in his whole frame there were but muscles and bones.

His dark face was marked by two or three wrinkles due to care rather than to age, for though the features were no longer those of a young man, yet maturity had not yet marked them for its own.

Andrès fancied the man's face and figure were familiar to him, yet he could not recollect where he had seen him. But Militona had not had a minute's doubt, and although he was so unlike his former self, she had at once recognised Juancho.

The great change in him in so short a time frightened her, for it was a proof of how terribly that man of bronze and steel had been tortured by his passion for her.

She quickly opened her fan to hide her face and leaned back, whispering to Andrès: —

"It is Juancho."

But she had not drawn back quickly enough; the torero had caught sight of her and saluted her with a gesture of the hand.

"Why, it is Juancho," said Andrès. "The poor fellow is terribly changed; he looks ten years older. So

he is the new performer of whom people are talking so much; he has evidently resumed his profession."

"Let us go, Andrès," said Militona to her husband. "I do not know why, but I feel quite upset, and as if something terrible were about to take place."

"Why, what can take place," replied Andrès, "save that picadores will get upset and horses gored, all of which is in the regular course of things?"

"I am afraid that Juancho may do some mad thing."

"You are still thinking of that nasty knife-thrust of his. If you knew Latin, I should tell you that I am safe from another of the same sort, in accordance with the rule *non bis in idem*. Besides, the fellow must have had time to cool off."

Juancho performed prodigies. He behaved as if he were invulnerable as an Achilles or a Roland: he took the bulls by the tail and made them spin round; he put his foot between their horns and leapt over them; he snatched the colours from their shoulders, planted himself straight in front of them, and indulged with unparalleled audacity in the most dangerous uses of the cloak. The spectators, carried away by enthusiasm, applauded frantically, and every one agreed that such

work had never been seen since the days of the Cid Campeador.

The quadrille of toreros, electrified by his example, appeared not to know what danger was; the picadores rode right into the centre of the ring; the banderillos stuck in their darts adorned with paper, without ever missing once, for Juancho seconded every man just at the right moment, by drawing away the fierce brute's attention and attracting it to himself. A chulo had slipped and the bull was just about to gore him, when Juancho drove it back at the peril of his own life.

Every thrust he gave was from upwards down, between the shoulders of the animal, driving the sword in to the hilt, and killing the bulls stone dead, without the cachetero having to end their agony with his dagger.

"By Jupiter!" said Andrès to Militona, "Montès, Chiclanero, Arjona, Labi, and the other fellows had better look out, or Juancho will beat them all, and indeed I think he beats them all now."

But there never again was to be such a performance. Juancho on that occasion attained to the highest summits of his art; he performed prodigies such as will never again be witnessed. Militona herself could not but applaud him; Andrès was stamping and applauding

like a madman; the excitement was at its height, and frantic shouts welcomed Juancho's every move.

The sixth bull was let loose.

Then occurred something extraordinary and unheard-of. Juancho, after having admirably handled the bull and used his muleta in incomparable fashion, took his sword and, instead of driving it into the animal's spine as everybody expected, threw it in the air with such force that it stuck in the ground, whirling and twisting some twenty yards away.

"What is he up to now?" exclaimed every one. "This is not courage, it is madness. What does he mean to do? To kill the bull with a slap of the hand?"

Juancho cast upon the box where sat Militona an ineffable glance in which were summed up all his sufferings and all his love, and remained motionless in front of the bull. The brute lowered its head, and drove its horn clean through the man's breast. It came out red to the root.

A roar of horror, the roar of ten thousand voices, ascended to heaven.

Militona fell back in her seat, pale as the dead. During that one awful minute she had loved Juancho.

The Nightingales

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But in the mansion lived two fair cousins who ever sang better
than all the birds in the park

THE NIGHTINGALES

ROUND the mansion stretched a beautiful park.

In the park itself there were all manner of birds: nightingales, blackbirds, warblers; every bird on earth had come to the place.

In spring it was impossible to hear anything for the singing; every leaf concealed a nest, every tree an orchestra. All the little feathery musicians of the grove rivalled with each other: some twittered, others warbled; some performed trills and pearly cadences, others indulged in fiorituri or sustained notes. Real musicians could not have done better.

But in the mansion lived two fair cousins who together sang better than all the birds in the park. The one was called Fleurette, and the other Isabel. They were both beautiful, attractive, and in the full bloom of their loveliness, and on Sundays, when they had on their handsome dresses, they would have been taken for angels if their snow-white shoulders had not proved them to be maids. All they lacked was wings. When they sang, their old uncle, the lord of Maulevrier, some-

times held their hands, lest they should take a fancy to fly away.

You may imagine what fine deeds were done in honour of Fleurette and Isabel at the jousts and tourneys. Their reputation for beauty and talent had spread throughout Europe, but they were none the prouder on that account. They lived very quietly, seeing scarcely any one save their little page Valentine, a handsome lad with golden hair, and the lord of Maulevrier, an old white-headed man, very much weather-worn and broken down after sixty years' fighting.

They passed their time in giving seed to the little birds, saying their prayers, and rehearsing together a motet, a madrigal, a villanelle, or other music; they also had flowers that they watered and cared for themselves. Their lives were spent in these sweet and poetic maidenly occupations; they kept themselves in the background and troubled not about the world, yet the world was interested in them. Neither the nightingale nor the rose may be hidden; they always betray themselves by their song and their scent. Now the two cousins were both nightingales and roses.

Dukes and princes came and asked them in marriage; the Emperor of Trebizond and the Soldan of

Egypt sent ambassadors to the lord of Maulevrier to proffer their hands, but the two cousins were satisfied to remain single and would have naught to do with any of them. It may be that a secret instinct told them that their mission here on earth was to sing and remain maids, and that they would fail to perform their duty if they did anything else.

They were very, very young when they had first come to the manor. The window of their room looked out upon the park, and they had been lulled to sleep by the song of birds. As soon as they could stand, Blondel, the old minstrel, had placed their tiny hands upon the ivory keys of the virginal; it had been their only plaything, and they had sung before they could speak. They sang just as other people breathe; it came naturally to them.

This education had exercised much influence on their characters. Their harmonious childhood had kept them apart from noisy and talkative children. They had never uttered a shrill cry or a discordant plaint. The musical sense, developed in them at the expense of the other senses, caused them to feel but little whatever did not pertain to music. They lived in a melodious atmosphere, and they were scarcely in touch

with the reality of the world around them save through sounds. They understood clearly the murmur of the foliage, the ripple of the water, the chiming of the clock, the sigh of the wind in the chimney, the buzz of the spinning-wheel, the splashing of the raindrops upon the quivering panes, — in a word, all external and all internal harmonies; but I must own that they felt no particular enthusiasm about a sunset, and they were as unable to appreciate a painting as if there had been a thick veil over their eyes of blue and of black. They were haunted by music; they dreamed of it; they forgot to eat and drink on account of it; they cared for nothing else on earth. Stay, they did love something else: Valentine and their flowers; Valentine, because he resembled the roses, and the roses because they resembled Valentine. But this affection was quite in the background. It is true that Valentine was only thirteen. Their greatest delight was to sing in the evening at their window the music they had composed during the day.

The most famous masters came from great distances to hear them and to compete with them, but they had no sooner heard one bar than they broke their instruments, tore up their scores, and acknowledged themselves vanquished. And indeed the music made by the cousins

was so agreeable and melodious that the cherubs came from heaven to the window with the other musicians and learned it in order to sing it to God.

One May evening the two cousins were singing a motet for two voices, and never was a motet composed or rendered better than this one. A nightingale in the park, nestling in a rose-bush, listened to them attentively, and when they had finished, drew near to the window and said to them in its nightingale speech:

"I should like to compete in song with you."

The two cousins replied that they were willing, and begged him to begin.

The nightingale began. It was a master among nightingales. Its little throat swelled, its wings fluttered, its whole body quivered. It sang roulades that were endless, brilliant bursts, arpeggios, chromatic scales; it went up and down, it prolonged the notes, it gave cadences in pearliest fashion and with incredible clearness; it seemed as though its voice, as well as its body, had wings. Then it stopped, sure that it had won the victory.

The two cousins sang in their turn, and did better than they had ever done. In comparison with theirs the nightingale's song sounded like a sparrow's twittering.

The winged artist tried a last effort. It sang a love song, and then performed a brilliant fanfare, which it crowned with an aigrette of high, vibrant, piercing notes wholly beyond the range of the human voice.

The two cousins, in no wise dismayed by its marvellous performance, turned the page of their music-book, and replied to the nightingale in such fashion that Saint Cecilia, who was listening to them from heaven, turned green with jealousy and let fall her bass-viol.

The nightingale made another attempt at singing, but it was exhausted by the struggle; its breath was gone, its feathers were all fluffed up, and its eyes were closing in spite of all it could do. It was dying.

"You sing better than I do," it said to the two cousins, "and my vain desire to overcome you is costing me my life. I ask one boon of you; I have a nest; in that nest are three birdlings. It is in the third eglantine bush in the great walk in the direction of the pond. Send and have them fetched, and teach them to sing like you, for I am dying."

And having thus spoken, the nightingale died. The two cousins mourned over it bitterly, it had sung so well. They called Valentine, the little golden-haired page, and told him where the nest was. Val-

entine, who was a sharp little fellow, easily found the place; he put the nest into his bosom and brought it safely to the house. Fleurette and Isabel, leaning on the balcony, were impatiently awaiting him. Valentine soon came up, holding the nest in his hands. The three nestlings popped their heads up and opened their bills very wide. The maidens felt compassion for these little orphans, and took turns in feeding them. When they had grown somewhat, they began their musical education, as they had promised to the defeated nightingale.

The birdlings became wonderfully tame and sang wonderfully well. They would fly about the room, and perch now on Isabel's head, now on Fleurette's shoulder. They would settle down in front of the music-book, and it really looked as if they could read the notes, so intelligently did they gaze at the minims and crotchets. They had learned every one of Fleurette's and Isabel's airs, and they were themselves beginning to improvise very pretty ones.

The cousins lived more and more retired, and at night sounds of supernatural melody were heard issuing from their room. The nightingales, thoroughly trained, took part in the concert, and sang almost as

well as their mistresses, who had themselves made great progress.

Their voices acquired day after day extraordinary brilliancy, and rang golden and crystalline far above the register of natural voices. The maidens were visibly wasting away; they had become pale as agates and well-nigh as transparent. The lord of Maulevrier tried to put a stop to their singing, but he never was able to manage it.

No sooner had they sung a few bars than a little red spot would show upon their cheeks and keep spreading until they had finished. Then the spot disappeared, but a cold sweat would wet their skin, and their lips tremble as if they were suffering from fever.

As for their singing, it was more beautiful than ever; there was something in it that was not of this world, and when the mighty, sonorous voices of the two frail young girls were heard, it was not difficult to foresee what would happen, namely, that the music would wreck the instruments.

They themselves realised this, and began to play upon their virginal, which they had forsaken for song. But one night their window was open, the birds were warbling in the park, the breeze was whispering har-

moniously; the air was so full of music that they could not resist the temptation to sing a duet they had composed the day before.

It was their swan song; a wondrous song filled with tears, rising to the most inaccessible heights of the scale, and going down the range of notes to the lowest depths. It was sparkling and incredible; a flood of trills, a fiery rain of chromatic flashes, a musical blaze impossible to describe; and meanwhile the little red spot grew terribly larger and spread all over their cheeks. The three nightingales watched them and listened to them with strange anxiety; they beat their wings, they fluttered here and there, they could not keep still. At last the girls got to the last phrase of the composition; their voices became so weirdly sonorous that it was plain it was no longer living beings who were singing. The nightingales had flown away. The two cousins were dead; their souls had fled with the last note. The nightingales flew straight to heaven to bear that last song to God, who kept them all three in His Paradise to perform before Him the music composed by the two cousins.

And later, God, out of these three nightingales, made the souls of Palestrina, Cimarosa, and Gluck.

The Marchioness's Lap-Dog

THE MARCHIONESS'S LAP-DOG

I

THE MORNING AFTER THE SUPPER

IT is not yet day in Eliante's room, although noon has just struck.

Noon! The pretty woman's dawn. But Eliante had been asked to supper at the Baroness's, and the party had been an extremely gay one. It is true that Eliante had partaken of little birds, pheasants' eggs in cullis, and other abominations only; she had barely touched with her rosy lips the foaming champagne, and drunk scarce two fingers of Barbadoes cream, for Eliante, like all ladies of her class, pretends to live on fresh milk and love only. Yet she is more weary than usual, and will see no one before three o'clock.

The Abbé V——, who was of the party, was splendidly extravagant, and the Chevalier played the most

novel trick upon the Commander; the best of the fun being that the Commander could not be brought to see that he had been fooled. In the gray dawn they had all driven down to the keeper's lodge to eat onion soup, in order to whet their appetites, and after breakfast the Chief Justice's lady had brought Eliante home in her carriage, for the latter's coach had not then turned up.

Eliante, feeling rather tired, has just opened half-way her lovely eyes, that are slightly heavy, and a faint smile, turning into a yawn, flits over her little heart-shaped mouth that looks like a rose. She is thinking of the Abbé's absurdities and the Chevalier's impertinences, and of the poor Lady Justice's nose that kept getting redder and redder. Soon, however, these remembrances fade away and give place to one only thought.

For, needs must it be told, coquettish and gallant though the Abbé proved himself, and caddish though the Chevalier was, it was not either of them who carried off the honours of the night.

It was another personage, who said not a word and yet was considered cleverer than both of them, who had not taken any pains with his dress, and yet had been voted the very acme of grace and elegance, who

had won the suffrages of the whole party. The Abbé himself, jealous though he was of him, was forced to recognise that his merit was beyond the common, and to salute the rising star.

I must not allow you to spend your time in useless conjectures and guesses. This personage, with whom all the ladies were in love, and who fills Eliante's thoughts at this moment, is simply the Marchioness's lap-dog, an incomparable toy poodle brought by her in her wadded muff.

II

FANFRELUCHE THE LAP-DOG

IN order to worthily praise this marvellous lap-dog I should have to pluck a pen from Cupid's wing; the hand of the Graces would alone be light enough to draw its portrait, and Latour's pencil would not prove too delicate.

It is called Fanfreluche, which is a very pretty name for a dog, and one that it does honour to.

Fanfreluche is no bigger than its mistress's fist, and everybody knows that the Marchioness has the smallest hand in the world; yet Fanfreluche looks quite large, almost the size of a lamb, for its silky coat is a foot long, and so fine, so soft, so shiny, that pussy's tail looks like a brush in comparison with it. When it gives you a paw, and you press it, you are quite astonished to feel nothing in your hand. Fanfreluche is not so much a dog as a flock of soft silk, in which shine a couple of beautiful brown eyes and a little pink nose. A poodle of that sort can have belonged

to the Mother of the Loves only, and she must have lost it on her way to Cythera, where her ladyship the Marchioness, who goes there every now and then, must have come upon it.

Pray look at its interesting and bright little face. Would not Roxelane herself have envied the little nose, tip-tilted like a flower, and with a line down the middle as on that of Anne of Austria? And are not those two tan spots above the eyes more effective than any "heart-breaker" patch put on in the most alluring way?

And how vivacious are its prominent eyes! And the double row of white teeth, no larger than grains of rice, which, at the least annoyance, show in all their brilliancy; what duchess but would envy their purity and pearliness? Then, besides its external attractions, darling Fanfreluche possesses innumerable society accomplishments: it dances a minuet more gracefully than Marcel himself; it can give a paw and tell the time; it jumps for the Queen and the royal princesses, and it can tell the right hand from the left. Fanfreluche is very clever, and knows a good deal more than the Academicians themselves. That it is not a member of the Academy is due to its having declined to

enter that body, believing, no doubt, that its absence would be the more conspicuous. The Abbé affirms that it knows dead languages better than most people, and that the only reason why it does not speak is that it enjoys the fun of teasing its mistress.

Nor is Fanfreluche voracious, like the common run of dogs. It is very dainty, very choice in its food, and very difficult to please. The only thing it eats is a vol-au-vent with brains, made expressly for it, and all it drinks is a small quantity of cream served in a Japanese porcelain saucer. However, when its mistress is supping out, it condescends to nibble a bit of the wing of a pullet and to toy with a little sweet at dessert. This, be it noted, is a special favour which every one may not receive, and to secure it the cook must be satisfactory to Fanfreluche. The little chap has but one fault — but who is perfect on this earth of ours? — it loves brandied cherries and Spanish snuff, of which it every now and then gobbles up a pinch. It shares this fad with the Prince de Condé.

As soon as it hears the Commander's gold snuff-box being opened, it is worth while to see it rise up on its hind legs and rap on the floor with its tail; and if the Marchioness happens to be deep in the delights of

whist or reversi, and has taken her eye off her dog, it will spring on to the Abbé's knees and get three or four brandied cherries. The consequence is that Fanfreluche, who has not a strong head, gets drunk as a piper and a couple of lords; it goes staggering around in the most comical fashion, and is ferociously fond of the Chevalier's calves, who, in order to preserve what he has left of them, is compelled to curl himself up in an arm-chair. Under those circumstances, Fanfreluche is no longer a toy poodle, but a raging lion, and the Marchioness alone can make it obey. It is most amusing to see the airs and tricks it indulges in before it will allow itself to be put back in the muff or laid to bed in its rose-wood box lined with white satin, trimmed with blue chenille. And nobody will ever know how many smacks with a busk or a fan the Abbé has got across the fingers on account of the pranks of Fanfreluche, whose accomplice he is.

III

A PASTEL BY LATOUR

IF the transition from a pretty dog to a pretty woman be not too abrupt, allow me to make a slight sketch of Eliante for you.

Eliante is unquestionably young; she may safely tell her real age for the next ten years without taking refuge in a fib, for the number of her springtimes is still but small. It is really a case of *aurea mediocritas*. Every one knows where the fragments of her last doll are to be found, and she is so notoriously a *child* that she unhesitatingly undertakes the parts of old women, duennas, and grandmothers in the performances of society proverbs and charades. Happy is Eliante, who has no need to dread being mistaken for the character she impersonates, and who can boldly paint on wrinkles without the risk of the artificial being taken for the natural!

On the other hand, her ladyship the Chief Justice's wife, whose nose is reddening visibly, to the huge

delight of her female friends, considers that the parts of young widows of twenty-five are too old for her.

Eliante, who is of good birth and moves in the best of society only, was fifteen when she married Count de ——; she had left the convent and had never seen her intended, who appeared to her to be very handsome and amiable. He happened to be the one and only man she had yet seen, aside from her confessor. Besides, to her, marriage meant nothing but a coach, new gowns, and diamonds.

The Count is well over forty; in the reign of the late King, he was what is called a roué, a lady-killer, a rake. He is most amiable to his wife, but as he had another affair on hand, a formal connection, he has never been seriously intimate with Eliante, and the young Countess enjoys the utmost liberty, for the Count is not in the least inclined to jealousy or other barbarous vices.

Eliante has not the Greek regularity of features, which every one declares to be the perfection of beauty, but which, in reality, charms no one. She has the loveliest eyes in the world and knows how to use them to the greatest advantage; delicately drawn eyebrows

that look like Cupid's bow; a pert little nose; the tiniest of mouths; and, in addition, such a mass of hair and so long that when it is undone it falls down to her knees; such perfect, well set, white teeth that they would force grief to smile in order to give them a chance to show themselves; hands both slender and plump; and a foot that would fit into Cinderella's slipper, — the whole forming a fairly agreeable combination. There is one thing only that is large in all Eliante's dainty perfection: it is her eyes. Her chief charm lies in her extreme grace and the way she sets off even the simplest dresses. Full court dress suits her wonderfully, but a négligé is even more becoming to her.

IV

POMPADOUR

ELIANTE is resting on her elbow, that sinks partly into a pillow of the finest Holland linen, trimmed with English point lace. She is thinking of Fanfreluche's unequalled perfection, and sighs as she reflects upon the Marchioness's luck. Eliante would willingly give three musketeers and a couple of society abbés in exchange for the unequalled poodle.

While she is dreaming, let us cast a glance at her bedroom; the more so that I shall not soon have another opportunity of describing a pretty woman's room of that time, and that the Pompadour style is now all the rage.

The bedstead of carved wood, painted white, picked out with mat gold and burnished gold, rests upon four ingeniously turned feet. The arched head-board, surmounted by a group of doves cooing and billing, is carefully upholstered, so that the fair sleeper shall not

run the risk of hurting her head if she has too vivid dreams in which illusion closely resembles reality. The dais, ornamented with four large plumes of feathers, and hung from the roof by a gilded cord, supports a double pair of curtains made of watered silver stuff of the colour called nymph's thigh. In the foot-board, in a frame festooned with delicately carved roses and daisies, is set a large mirror, which reflects the Countess's graceful attitudes, and usefully betrays her charms by showing what must not be shown. Besides it brightens and lights up this somewhat dark part. Eliante is so made that she does not need to enshroud herself in prudent mystery; she has no need for dim lighting and softened hues.

Upon a small table quivers, in a night-lamp of old Sèvres china, a little shy star, which has been robbed of its nocturnal aureole by the joyous beams of the sun that are filtering in between the cracks of the shutters and the parting of the curtains, for the maids had taken it for granted that her ladyship would return early, and the preparations for her night's rest had been made as usual.

The panels above the doors, done in tender lilac camaïeu, represent mythological and amorous scenes.

The painter has displayed much warmth and voluptuousness in these compositions, which, thanks to the pleasant easy way in which they are painted, would inspire the most rigid and stand-off prude with gay and erotic fancies.

The hangings, which are of the same stuff and colour as the curtains of the bed, are fastened by silver loops, cords, and knots. One of the advantages of these hangings is that they cause any woman who has not, like Eliante, a complexion that can stand anything, to look frightful and red as a fury. The young Countess wickedly chose that particular shade in order to vex a couple of her best friends who, through overmuch rouging, have turned the colour of quince, and whom she insists on always receiving in this room.

Mirrors in rocaille frames fill the bays between the windows. There never can be too many mirrors in a pretty woman's room, but I should willingly smash those which have to reflect ugly faces. Is it not sufficient to see the Chief Justice's lady and the old dowager de B —— one single time?

The mantelpiece is covered with Chinese figures, statuettes in Parian and Dresden porcelain. Two tall vases of green céladon craquelé, richly mounted, stand

at either end. A superb clock by Boulle, inlaid with tortoise-shell, and the hands of which are on their way to three o'clock, rests upon an equally superb base, adorned with golden foliage. In front of the fireplace, in which is burning a bright fire, a silver filigree fire-screen forms a number of sharp angles. Screens of damask in carved wood frames, a duchess, and an embroidery frame complete the furniture in this part.

A tall screen, in real China lacquer, covered with herons with lofty aigrettes, winged dragons, palm-trees, and fishermen with cormorants on their fists, prevents draughts from making their way into this sanctuary of the Graces, while a Turkey carpet, brought to Paris by the Count, who was formerly ambassador to the Sublime Porte, deadens the sound of steps, and double-lined shutters keep all external noise out of this asylum of rest and love. Such was the Countess Eliante's bedroom.

I hope that in these days of auctioneer literature, I may be forgiven this somewhat lengthy description, especially if it be borne in mind that I might easily have made it twice as long, and that I could not have been sent to jail in consequence.

V

POURPARLERS

FANCHONETTE, the Countess's maid, enters on tip-toe, advances cautiously towards the bed, and seeing that *Eliante* is not asleep,—

Your ladyship—

Eliante. Well, Fanchonette, what is the matter? Is the house on fire? You look quite frightened.

Fanchonette. No, your ladyship, the house is not on fire; it is worse than that; Duke Alcindor has been waiting for two hours past, and wants to come in.

Eliante. Tell him that I cannot see him; tell him that I have the megrims; that I am not at home.

Fanchonette. I have done so already, but he will not go away. He says that if you are not in, you will have to come in; and that if you are in, you will have to go out by and by. He insists on blockading your door.

Eliante. What a dreadful man!

Fanchonette. He is going to have a tent and provisions brought, and to settle down in your ladyship's

drawing-room. He is so anxious to talk to you that he will, if need be, climb in by the window.

Eliante. What an odd notion! The man is out of his senses. I wonder what he can have to say to me. Fanchonette, how do I look to-day? I seem to be dreadfully ugly; I feel as if I looked like Lady B——.

Fanchonette. On the contrary; your ladyship never looked better. You ladyship's complexion is blooming.

Eliante. Well, tidy up my head-dress, and tell the Duke that I consent to see him.

VI

ELIANTE'S BEDSIDE

ELIANTE, DUKE ALCINDOR.

ALCINDOR. Incomparable Eliante, you behold the most humble of your subjects, who has been driven to the harsh necessity of being importunate by the great desire he felt to lay his homage at the feet of your throne.

Eliante. I would have you observe, Duke, that I am in bed and not on a throne, and at the same time I must ask you to forgive me for not rising to receive you.

Alcindor. Is not the bed the pretty woman's throne? And as regards not rising to receive me, I must be allowed to look upon it as a favour.

Eliante. Now I come to think of it, I forbid you, Alcindor, to look upon the fact of your being admitted to my bedside as a favour. You are so punctilious that one must be on one's guard with you.

Alcindor. That is hard of you: you have always been most ignobly virtuous with me, and yet Heaven

is my witness that I burn for you with the liveliest flame. You make me feel —

Eliante. Alcindor, when you want to talk of your flame, put some fire in your eye and try to speak less coldly. You really look afraid that I might believe you.

Alcindor. What dreadful things you say, Eliante. One tenth of that would be enough to destroy a man's reputation. Happily I have nothing to fear in that respect. I shall show you —

Eliante. I do not want to be shown.

Alcindor, picking up a book on the table. What is this? Another new book? A piece of farrago, I suppose. Authors are really a nuisance. Do you receive such fellows?

Eliante. Not I. But I have a couple of poets who sleep in the stables and eat with the servants. They send me in that stuff by Fanchonette, whom they call Iris and Venus.

Alcindor, coming close to the bed. I must say nightcaps are strikingly becoming to you, and you are bewitching in your wrapper.

Eliante. I am not; I am ugly as sin.

Alcindor. I most humbly beg your pardon for contradicting you, but that is absolutely false. Even if I

have to fight a duel with you on the subject, I shall not retract.

Eliante. I am sure I look like a fright. I never closed my eyes once.

Alcindor. You are as blooming as a devotee or a boarding-school miss. Your eyes seem to me singularly bright. Were you at the Baroness's little supper party? I am told that it was perfect of its kind. The Abbé, in particular, was in great form. I am grieved to the heart that I could not accept the dear Baroness's invitation, but one cannot be everywhere. You would never believe how many horses I founder; my best one is done out, and I do not know how I stand it myself. Ah! so you were at the supper? On my honour, I shall go hang myself when I leave you.

Eliante. The Marchioness was there with a little dog I had never seen her with before. A toy poodle of the very best breed; I have never seen anything like it. Its name is Fanfreluche. It is such a love of a dog! Why were you so anxious to see me, Duke?

Alcindor. Because I wanted to see you. Is not that a very good reason?

Eliante. Very good indeed. But had you nothing more important to tell me?

Alcindor. Why, I wanted to formally declare my love for you, and to establish myself as a permanent suitor of your perfection.

Eliante. You are talking nonsense, Duke. You know as well as I do that you are not the least little bit in love.

Alcindor. Ah! fairest Eliante, the truth is that my heart is pierced through and through. If you will only look at my back you will see the barb of the arrow sticking out.

Eliante. The loveliest little face; long silky hair, tan spots, bandy legs. I do believe I shall go crazy if I do not have just such another poodle. But there is not another like it.

Alcindor. Seriously, now, I love you.

Eliante. Its little tail sticking up.

Alcindor. I adore you.

Eliante. Its ears so curly.

Alcindor. You are divine.

Eliante. Oh, the lovely little creature! The Abbé says it can talk Hebrew. Oh, I am so unhappy! It dances so prettily. I hate the Marchioness; she is a mean thing, and wears false hair.

Alcindor. What can I do to console you? Shall I

cross the seas, or jump on to the towers of Notre-Dame? I can do it: you have only to give the order.

Eliante. I want nothing but Fanfreluche. In all my life I have had but one overmastering desire, and I cannot gratify it. I think I shall have vapours; my nerves are going already. Pass me the General Lamothe drops, Duke. Look, in that vial on the table. I feel faint.

Alcindor, putting the vial to her nose. What a superb ruffle you have on. It is Malines or Brussels point lace, if I am not mistaken.

Eliante. You annoy me beyond endurance, Alcindor. Stop, now. Ah! I would willingly kiss the devil, or my husband, for the matter of that, if he were to walk in with Fanfreluche under his arm.

Alcindor. You would, would you? And if it were I that came in with the dog, would I be treated worse than the devil or your husband?

Eliante. No; rather better, perhaps. I say no more. Ring for Fanchonette to come and dress me.

Alcindor. I obey you, Madam. I' faith, the die is cast. I am going to turn dog-stealer. Forgive me, O my ancestors. Jupiter turned himself into a goose

and a bull, which was coming down a good deal more. Love enjoys reducing the haughtiest hearts to such harsh extremities. Farewell, Madam. I go in quest of the Golden Fleece.

Eliante. Farewell. May Cupid and Mercury assist you. And when you return, be sure to have Fanfreluche with you, or I shall receive you as would a Hyrcanian tigress, with all my claws and teeth out. Here is Fanchonette: good-bye, Duke.

VII

ALCINDOR

ALCINDOR, having returned home, threw himself into an easy-chair, and sighed in a soft and melodious fashion that meant: "The devil fly away with all affected and hysterical prudes and their absurd fancies!"

He leaned back, gazed fixedly at the mouldings on the ceiling, and languidly stretched his hand out towards the watered-silk bell-pull. He rang several times, but no one came. Alcindor being naturally very short-tempered and impatient of any delay, hung on the bell-pull with both hands and broke it. Having thus deprived himself of the means of communicating with his people in the antechamber and the offices, and determined not to leave his chair, he began making a terrific row.

"Here! Giroflée, Similor, Marmelade, Galopin, Champagne! Where the devil are you all? There is not a man of rank in France so ill-served as I am. Here!

you rascals, fools, idiots, scoundrels, villains! You shall each of you be thrashed within an inch of your lives! Let the first one to come in look out for himself! Here! you black and white rabble, I shall have you all sent to the galleys, hanged, or broken on the wheel, for you deserve it. I shall take care to commend you particularly to the provost, you may be sure. Damn you! blast you! curse you! a plague upon you! The scoundrels will make me forget myself! Champagne, Basque, Galopin; Similor, Marmelade, Giroflée! Here, I say! The confounded brutes! I can no more; I am dying! Ouf!"

And Duke Alcindor, choking with rage and a fresh lot of invectives that stuck in his throat, fell exhausted in his chair.

At last the door opened and gave admission to a big, round, chubby negro face, the chubbier for its mouth being filled with quail, stolen from the pantry, the swallowing of which had been interrupted by the mad shouts of Alcindor. This was Similor, the Duke's favourite negro servant, and behind him showed timidly Giroflée's sharp nose.

"Did white master call black man?" inquired Similor, the negro, in wheedling tones that betrayed his

terror, as with difficulty he made his tongue work through the great mass of bread and meat in his mouth.

"Did I call you, you villain? I'll have you skinned alive and turned inside out like an old coat, to see if the lining of your skin is as black as the stuff it is made of. There! you scoundrel!"

And the Duke, whose wrath blazed up again as he gave vent to it, seized a candlestick on the table and hurled it at the negro's head. But the candlestick struck, instead, one of the mirrors and smashed it to flinders.

Similor, who was well used to his master's ways, let himself fall flat on his stomach, howling plaintively: "Oh! oh! oh! I am killed! Oh! dear master! I am killed! The candlestick has gone clean through me! I can feel the big hole! I am dead for sure this time! Wow! Wow!"

And he made the most comical faces, for he knew that these rarely failed to prove effective.

"Come, you hound," said Alcindor, his anger passed and landing a kick on the negro's posterior, "be done with your fooling. And you, Giroflée, since you are here at last, make me comfortable, for I shall not go

out again to-day. Prepare me for bed, Giroflée, and you, Similor, tell the porter that I am at home to no one. Stay; if a lady in a black hood, with small feet and white hands, should call, show her up. But for heaven's sake, let him not make a mistake and admit Elmire or Zulmé, two creatures I am sick of and that I tired of a week ago."

Then Duke Alcindor stretched himself out in an easy-chair and Giroflée began to make his toilet. Similor stood in front of him, holding out pins when necessary, putting out his tongue, making faces, and pulling the monkey's tail, causing it to mow and chatter every time.

VIII

PERPLEXITY

I MUST confess that although Duke Alcindor had two hundred thousand a year, a shapely leg and very fine teeth, he was absolutely lacking in resourcefulness. This was not apparent at first sight, for he had plenty of talk and polish, to say nothing of the assurance of a man who is well made, has two hundred thousand a year in real estate, a great name, a fine title, and the expectation of being ere long made a grandee of Spain. Under those circumstances it is easy to understand how it was the Duke passed, in a certain set, for an extremely brilliant man, but under his fine exterior he was in reality very much of a fool.

Alcindor, who believed it was his duty to become the Countess Eliante's lover, since she was all the rage, and naturally women who are all the rage are the prey of fashionable men, had at first been delighted that the only condition he had to fulfil in order to

be happy should be the gift of Fanfreluche to the Countess.

He had dreaded above all having to submit to all the annoyances of a regular intrigue and of the state of a declared pretender, and had feared that Eliante, with a view to making her own triumph all the more conspicuous, would spare him none of the customary gradations which the progress of enlightenment has markedly diminished in number since the days of our barbarous ancestors, but which even now may consume a whole week when the divinity adored has a fancy for posing as a woman with lofty principles and a strong sense of duty.

Besides, the Chevalier de Versac, a rival detested by Alcindor on account of his elegant self-conceit, the good taste of his equipages, the richness and the number of his snuff-boxes, and his watches, had been Eliante's lover before him. Indeed, he was reported to have taken precedence of all the others. It was this fact that had led Alcindor to seek to win Eliante and caused him to pay her marked attentions. But while Eliante had always received him favourably enough, his suit had not appeared likely to be very speedily crowned with success, until the moment when

the lady had given him almost positive reason to hope when speaking of Fanfreluche the poodle.

A pretty woman in exchange for a pretty dog! At first blush, Duke Alcindor had thought he was getting by far the best of the bargain, for it seemed the easiest thing in the world to get hold of Fanfreluche. In reality, however, nothing was more difficult. The golden apples of the garden of the Hesperides were easy to secure in comparison, and a bushel of them could have been obtained with less difficulty than a single hair from Fanfreluche's silky coat.

How was he to get at it? He might ask the Marchioness to give it to him, but she would sooner part with her rouge and her diamonds. As for stealing it, she always carried it in her muff, so the poor Duke did not know which way to turn, and was utterly perplexed.

"Hang it all, I had rather have to do with a courtesan! There is no place like the Opera for easy loves; the girls there have common-sense and do not indulge in eccentric fancies. What they want is hard cash or its equivalent. With a few diamonds, silver plate, a coach, or some such trifle, one can get any of them. But the idiocy of wanting the particular poodle that

belongs to the Marchioness! I am quite willing to present her, in return for her priceless favours, with a whole pack of toy dogs just as handsome as Fanfreluche. But no, sir; she will have none other than that little beast. It is not, either, as if I were very much in love with her; there is nothing fine about her but her eyes and her teeth; she is thin; her charm lies mainly in her manner and her style. Personally I prefer Rosina Desobry, but I owe it to my reputation to possess and show off Eliante, for I am reproached with seeking the easiest love affairs, and some of my envious friends, de Versac first and foremost, have bruited it abroad that I lack perseverance to overcome really important difficulties. I am bound, therefore, to get Eliante, but to do that I must first get Fanfreluche. What a devil of a notion it is to make a duke and peer turn dog-stealer."

"If your Grace keeps moving about so much, I shall never be able to dress your Grace's hair," said Giroflée timidly.

"Giroflée, you who are my valet, and you, Similor, who are my favourite blackamoor, I will confess to you that you are attending upon a duke who is in a great quandary."

"What is the trouble, my lord Duke?" returned Giroflée, as he curled the last ringlet. "What can possibly trouble such a person as your Grace?"

"You fancy, you low-born fellows, that a duke and peer is above other mortals; it is true that he is, but that does not prevent my being unable to decide what I am to do in my present fix. O Giroflée! O Similor, you behold your beloved master strangely perplexed."

"If your Grace deigned to confide in me," said Giroflée, laying his hand on his heart.

"To confide in us," broke in Similor, who was eager to obtain the information in view of the profits he would certainly derive from it.

"And tell me —" went on Giroflée.

"And tell us —" again put in Similor.

"— what is troubling your Grace."

Similor, having, as he believed, made clear his interest in the confidence, and aware that he was not nearly as great an orator as Giroflée, allowed the latter to proceed undisturbed.

"I might be of some use to your Grace and suggest something. I seize the opportunity of affirming that I am devoted to your Grace, and I may say that if I could be of any service to my lord Duke, I should

unhesitatingly expose my life in endeavouring to do so."

"We would," added the silent Similor, who was bound to maintain the duality, and was annoyed by the too frequent use of "I" by Giroflée.

"Thanks, thanks, my children; you move me deeply. Do not pursue the subject. Briefly here is the trouble: Fanfreluche, the Marchioness's lap-dog has to be stolen. If you do the business within the week, you shall have fifty louis, but twenty-five only if you take a fortnight to it."

Giroflée turned pale with joy, and Similor turned a summersault; for stealing, to these two accomplished rascals, was a mere bagatelle. Indeed, Similor, who was a conscientious rogue, said to his master: —

"My lord Duke, we can steal something else into the bargain, if your Grace desires it."

"Look here, you rascals; steal the dog and the dog only, — if you do not want to be soundly thrashed," added the Duke paternally. "Similor, you are too zealous."

Giroflée, who was consummately prudent, took care to obtain from the Duke one half of the promised amount, remarking that money is the sinews of war,

and that one must have it even to steal. The Duke, whose belief in Giroflée's probity was by no means unbounded, at first turned a deaf ear to him, but ended by consenting to give the twenty-five louis. Giroflée, in order to soothe him, made out a wonderfully detailed estimate which went to show that the Duke was actually in pocket by the transaction.

Giroflée s Estimate

" Ten louis for the purchase of a déshabillé, pigeon-breast colour, for Mlle. Beauveau, the Marchioness's maid, who has charge of Fanfreluche the lap-dog, with a view to make her look favourably upon Giroflée, and to facilitate his access to the house.

" Ten louis to be spent in making the porter drunk and gaining his confidence, so that he may raise no objections to the exit of the aforesaid Fanfreluche in Giroflée's company.

" One louis for biscuits, cracknels, caramel, almonds, burnt almonds, and other sweets destined to excite the appetite and to corrupt the probity of the lap-dog.

" Plus four louis for a little female pug, which would be of considerable assistance to Giroflée in his plans for the seduction of the lap-dog."

The scrupulous valet had not included in this estimate the value of his own time, nor his physical and moral trouble, seeing that what he was undertaking was done from sheer love of the Duke, for whom he would willingly have risked going to the galleys. Alcindor, touched by such devotion, acknowledged that the estimate was a very reasonable one.

Similor and Giroflée, having divided the twenty-five louis between them, started off on their expedition with such incredible ardour that they had barely reached the corner of the street when they felt so thirsty that they had perforce to enter a tavern in order to refresh themselves by drinking a bottle or two of wine. Their thirst, however, could not be so easily quenched, and they found themselves compelled to call for two other bottles, and so on until the following morning; so that when they emerged from that place of delights their legs were rather shaky. This did not prevent their proceeding to put in some more time in another pot-house not twenty yards away, where they stayed until their money was almost all gone. Then they repaired to the Pont-Neuf, where they purchased a poodle, fairly like Fanfreluche, which cost them a couple of francs, and which they bore triumphantly to Duke Alcindor.

IX

THE SHAM FANFRELUCHE

ALCINDOR was immensely pleased with the swift work done by Similor and Giroflée, thanks to which he was at last in possession of the precious lap-dog that turned the heads of so many pretty women, the exquisite Fanfreluche that had caused the Abbé de V——'s star to pale, the delicate and curious creature of which the Marchioness was prouder than of her cream-coloured horses, her six-foot-six groom, and her postilion, — so small that she could have put him in her pocket, — and which she was fonder of than of her lovers, her husband, her children — than whist or reversi. How delighted Eliante would be when he presented her with the dear little fellow in a silk-lined basket, covered with rose favours! What languorous glances, what killing looks, what adorable smiles would be addressed to the happy Alcindor until the time, no doubt very near, when the cup of his bliss would be full!

"It will make Versac burst with rage," said Alcindor

to himself as he snapped his fingers for joy. "In spite of his affected indifference, I suspect he is still very much in love with the Countess and has a secret intrigue with her."

In order to lose no time, the Duke resolved to carry the supposed Fanfreluche — for he had not the least idea that it was a substitute — to the young beauty that very evening. The innocent looks of Giroflée and Similor averted any suspicion, and Alcindor was far from suspecting that the animal for which he had paid twenty-five louis had really cost but a couple of francs. The resemblance between the two pets was perfect: bandy legs, tip-tilted nose, spots over the eyes, tail sticking up; two drops of water, two eggs could not be more alike. Happily Alcindor did not think of making Fanfreluche's double perform a minuet; the Pont-Neuf dog, entirely unacquainted with the fine manners of society, would have betrayed itself by its awkwardness and inexperience.

Desirous of sustaining comparison with Fanfreluche worthily, Alcindor took extraordinary pains with his dress. He wore a coat of cloth of gold, lined with cloth of silver, with diamond buttons so arranged that each button formed one of the letters of his name; a Venetian

lace ruffle worth a thousand crowns, and handsomely spotted with a few grains of Spanish snuff, spread majestically on his breast through the opened reddish-brown velvet vest; his legs, encased in white silk stockings, with gold clockings, were remarkable for the elegant roundness of the calf and the aristocratic slenderness of the ankles, while his naturally small feet were compressed in red-heeled shoes. A frail whale-bone rapier, in a white velvet sheath, with a diamond studded hilt, the point up, the hilt down, saucily perked up the tail of his coat. As for his breeches, I regret that I have not been able to ascertain for a certainty of what stuff they were made, though I have reason to believe they were of pearl-gray velvet; but I would not swear to it.

When Giroflée had finished removing with an ivory knife the powder clinging to the Duke's forehead, he was filled with exceeding pride at seeing his master so well dressed, and hastened to fetch a mirror, which he placed before the Duke.

"Your Grace, I am satisfied with my handiwork; your Grace never looked better and will assuredly find no woman hard-hearted enough to resist him this evening."

"His lordship would be handsomer still if his lordship's face were painted black, but his Grace will do very well so," added Similor, ever careful to retain the favour he enjoyed, and not to allow the astute Giroflée to surpass him in flattery.

"Call Marmelade, Similor," said the Duke.

Marmelade, a very tall negro, appeared.

"Have the carriage brought round."

When the carriage was at the door, the Duke went down, humming an air, and carrying the sham Fanfreluche, in perfect innocence, in a small basket slung round his neck.

The Duke's equipage was in the best of taste and turned out in conformity with the latest decrees of fashion; he had a huge coachman, with grog-blossoms on his nose, dead drunk, periwigged, wearing a huge bouquet, white gloves, white reins, and a vast fur cape; footmen of most insolent mien, bearing wax torches, two of them in front and three behind, in accordance with the strictest rules. The carriage itself was carved and gilded, the Duke's coat of arms was painted on the panels, and the whole vehicle was of regal magnificence. Four tall light chestnut Mecklenburgh horses, their manes plaited and their tails

knotted with bows of the Duke's colours, drew the huge machine.

Alcindor, enchanted with himself and full of the most flattering hopes, ordered the coachman to whip up his horses and to go at full speed. The Jehu, who was quite willing to drive at a breakneck pace, and who would not have yielded the crown of the causeway to anybody, even if he had to push past the equipage of a prince of the blood, — so full was he of the importance of his position, — drove his animals at a hard gallop, spite of the shouts of the bourgeois and other contemptible pedestrians, whom he took pleasure in covering with mud.

The Duke went upstairs and had himself announced as "Il Signor Fanfrelucio and Duke Alcindor." Although Eliante was not visible, for she was dressing for the Opera, Fanfreluche's magic name, like the "Open, Sesame!" in Arabian tales, caused every door to fly open and every order to be disregarded.

When Eliante saw in the basket the Duke had slung round his neck the sham Fanfreluche sitting up and nosing around with a restless look, she uttered a shrill little cry, and clapping her hands with delight, ran to the Duke and said to him: "Alcindor, you are a darling!"

Then she caught hold of the lap-dog, quite bewildered by so much honour, and kissed it very tenderly between the eyes.

Alcindor was not surprised at the preference the Countess exhibited in favour of the dog, and patiently waited for his turn. I had forgotten to say that Eliante had risen so abruptly that her cambric wrapper had become disarranged, so that Alcindor noted with satisfaction he had yielded to a burst of ill-temper, and that Eliante possessed other beauties than her eyes and her teeth.

"Madam," said Alcindor sweetly, "I am neither the devil nor your husband, but merely a man who adores you. Here is Fanfreluche; pray remember your promise."

Eliante gave Duke Alcindor a good, hearty kiss, but you know that in the matter of kisses, when a pretty woman bestows them, every man is bound to show himself generous and to refuse to keep what has been given him; so Alcindor, who was no miser, gave Eliante back her kiss, largely revised and added to. Fortunately Fanchonette came in just in time.

"Be kind enough to stand for a minute behind that screen, and as soon as I have got my corset on, you shall be summoned."

"You may come now, sir," said Fanchonette, presently.

Eliante had her hair powdered, two love-locks hanging down either side of her face, the rest of her hair dressed porcupine fashion on top of her head, the seven bristles well-marked, and soft crimps admirably setting off her blooming face. White feathers put on crossways gave her a most provoking and saucy look. In a word, she looked uncommonly well.

Her gown was put on, the hoops were eight yards wide, and the petticoat was caught up with diamond knots and butterflies. The skirt, of watered silk, of the softest tea-rose hue, fell in full rich folds from her wasp-like waist. Her bodice, half closed by bars of ribbons, allowed a glimpse of beauties worthy of princes and of gods. She wore neither necklace nor cord of diamonds, for she was well aware that no one would look at the gems for her neck, and that everybody would cry out against concealing any part of it. Her sole ornament was a little natural pompon rose that bloomed at the entrance to the fair paradise. Her shoes, of the same material as her dress, might have been worn by a Chinese woman.

"I have a spare seat in my box, Duke," said Eliante;

"and afterwards you may bring me home," she added with a smile.

Duke Alcindor bowed respectfully; Eliante took the sham Fanfreluche in her muff, and they drove off to the Opera.

A ballet by a fashionable composer was being performed. The place was crowded; from the lowest to the highest tier of boxes every seat was taken. The composer of the ballet excelled in rendering the sentiment of love by a succession of poses most voluptuous in themselves, though he never overstepped the bounds of decency. The violence of the feeling that masters gods as well as men was expressed by steps full of passion, and ardent attitudes copied from nature. The graceful Batylle and the sparkling Euphrosina were applauded as they deserved to be, that is, to the echo. In vain did old connoisseurs in the orchestra sound the praises of the noble grace and the majestic poses of the dancer who had formerly been the star; the young fellows called them dotards and refused to listen.

Alcindor, wholly taken up with Eliante, paid but slight attention to the performance on the stage, while Eliante herself was filled with delight at owning Fanfreluche, and exulted at the thought of the Mar-

chioness's despair at being deprived of her beloved lap-dog.

Yet the setting of the stage was very beautiful and merited more attentive spectators. It represented the grotto of the god of the waters, with madrepores, corals, shells, and mother-of-pearl imitated in the most perfect manner and remarkably brilliant; a fairy palace beyond all that fairy tales have of most opulent and marvellous, and pretty girls coming down from above in admirably managed scenic effects. But Alcindor was taken up with Eliante, and Eliante with Fanfreluche, and also a little bit with Alcindor, whose figure and rich dress had particularly struck her that evening.

As for the sham Fanfreluche, it looked very unhappy; unaccustomed to such fine company, it rested its front paws upon the rail of the box and looked round with bewildered glances.

Suddenly a most unexpected effect was produced. The door of a box opened noisily, and a lady, brilliant with gems, her dress cut very low, and rouged like a princess, in a beautiful gown that she wore to great advantage, entered and sat down with two or three young noblemen. It was the Marchioness. A little dog put its head out of her muff, and rested its paws

upon the front of the box with an impudent air worthy of a duke and peer. It was Fanfreluche, the one and only Fanfreluche.

Eliante saw it, oh, cruel fate! She cast upon the astounded Duke a glance charged with lightnings, then, overcome by emotion, fainted away. She was taken home, and it was more than an hour before she came to herself, for neither English salts, nor the General Lamothe drops, nor Carmelite water, nor Queen of Hungary water, nor burned feathers held to her nose succeeded in bringing her to, and if the suggestion to dash water in her face had not suddenly recalled her to life, it might have been supposed that she was actually dead.

As for Alcindor, he was inconsolable. For Eliante refused to see him, and he tried to assuage his grief by having Giroflée and Similor thrashed twice a day. That was the sole reason why he did not kick them both out.

Yet it is said that a few days later he received the following note from Eliante:

"My dear Duke, — I thought you had deliberately deceived me, but I have since learned that you

were yourself deceived by Giroflée and Similor. The dog you gave me is quite clever and only needs training to eclipse Fanfreluche. You dance divinely; will you not teach it? Good-bye. ALCINDOR."

A couple of months later, Pistache, the lap-dog, younger, more active, and more graceful, completely outshone Fanfreluche, the other lap-dog, and Alcindor presented the Chevalier de Versac, who objected to any one poaching on his preserves, with a very fine sword-thrust. Versac never recovered the ground he thus lost, and Alcindor became the uncontested leader of fashion.

Omphale

OMPHALE

A ROCOCO STORY

MY uncle, the Chevalier de ——, lived in a small house looking out on the one side upon the gloomy Rue des Tournelles, and on the other upon the gloomy Boulevard Saint-Antoine. Between the boulevard and the main building, some remnants of old quickset hedges, fallen a prey to lichens and insects, raised piteously their withered boughs at the bottom of a sort of well enclosed between high sombre walls. A number of starved flowers languidly hung their heads like maidens dying of consumption, and waited for a sunbeam to dry their half-rotted leaves. The walks had been invaded by the grass, and it was so long since they had been raked that it was difficult to make them out. One or two gold fish swam, or floated rather, in a pond covered with water-lentils and marsh plants.

This was what my uncle called his garden.

Now in this garden of my uncle's, besides the lovely things I have described, there was a very melancholy building to which, for the sake of antithesis, no doubt, he had given the name of "Heart's Delight." It was in a thoroughly ruinous condition; the walls bulged outwards; great pieces of plastering had fallen away and lay on the ground among the nettles and wild oats; the wood-work of the doors and shutters had warped, and neither doors nor windows closed properly. A sort of big pot with radiating effluvia escaping from it adorned the main entrance, for in the days of Louis XV. when Heart's Delight was built, care was always taken to provide two entrances. The cornice, much damaged by the filtration of rain water, was overladen with ova, acanthus leaves, and volutes. In a word, my uncle's Heart's Delight was as sorry a building as one could see.

This poor recent ruin, which was in as bad condition as if it had been a thousand years old, a plaster, and not a stone ruin, wrinkled, cracked, leprous, moss-eaten and covered with efflorescent saltpetre, looked like a man old before his time, who has worn himself out by filthy debauch. It inspired no respect, for there is nothing on earth so ugly and wretched as an old gauze gown or

an old plastered wall, both things that have no right to last, yet do keep on lasting.

It was in that building my uncle had installed me.

The interior, though better preserved than the exterior, was just as rococo. The bed hangings were of yellow silk damask with a pattern of great white flowers. A shell-work clock rested on a base inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ivory. A wreath of Burgundy roses wound coquettishly round a Venetian mirror, and above the doors were painted in camaïeu panels representing the four seasons. A beautiful lady, her hair powdered white, wearing a sky-blue bodice with bars of ribbons of the same hue, a bow in her right hand, a partridge in her left, a crescent on her brow, and a greyhound at her feet, spread herself and smiled most graciously in a large oval frame. It was a former mistress of my uncle's, whom he had painted in the character of Diana. The furniture, it will be seen, was anything but modern; it was the easiest thing in the world to fancy one's self back in the days of the Regency, especially as the tapestry on the walls completely carried out the illusion.

This tapestry represented Hercules spinning at the feet of Omphale. The drawing was strained in the

manner of Van Loo, and was of the most Pompadour style imaginable. Hercules' distaff was adorned with a rose-coloured favour; he crooked his little finger with peculiar grace, like a marquis taking a pinch of snuff, as he spun, between his thumb and his forefinger, a few threads of flax. His muscular neck was laden with knots of ribbon, rosettes, rows of pearls, and innumerable feminine ornaments, while a wide pigeon's-breast skirt, with two immense hoops, imparted the final touch to the fashionable appearance of the hero, the slayer of monsters.

Omphale's fair shoulders were half covered by the skin of the Nemean lion; her dainty hand rested on her lover's knotty club; her lovely pale-golden hair, powdered in the same tone, fell nonchalantly adown her neck, supple and undulating like a dove's; her little feet, worthy of any Spanish or Chinese woman, and plainly too small for Cinderella's slipper, were shod with semi-antique cothurns, of a tender lilac shade, embroidered with pearls. She was really charming. She threw back her head in the sauciest possible way; her mouth was pursed up into a delightful pout; her cheeks were slightly flushed; a heart-breaker patch, skilfully placed, brought out the brilliancy of her com-

plexion marvellously well. All she needed, to be transformed into an accomplished musketeer, was a little mustache.

There were a good many other figures in the tapestry, — the inevitable companion, and the regulation Cupid, — but they did not leave in my memory an impression sufficiently distinct to enable me to describe them.

I was very young at that time, by which I do not mean to imply that I am very old now; simply that I had just left school, and that I was staying with my uncle until I should decide on the profession I would embrace. If the old gentleman could have foreseen that it would be that of a writer of fantastic stories, I am quite sure he would have turned me out and disinherited me irrevocably, for he professed the most aristocratic contempt for literature in general and authors in particular. Like the true gentleman he was, he would have liked to have every one of the scribblers who make it a business to spoil paper and to speak irreverently of people of quality, thrashed or hanged by his servants.

Well, then, I had just left school; I was filled with illusions and dreams; I was just as innocent, and per-

haps even more innocent, than a Salency maiden. Delighted at having no more impositions to write, I considered that everything was for the best in the best possible of worlds. I believed in no end of things; I believed in M. de Florian's shepherdesses; in curled and powdered sheep; I had not a doubt concerning Mme. Deshoulières' flock. I really believed that there were nine Muses, for old Jouvency's "Appendix de Diis et Heroïbus" said so. What I remembered of Berquin and Gessner enabled me to create for myself a little world in which everything was rose-coloured, sky-blue, or apple-green. Oh, blessed innocence! *sancta simplicitas!* as Mephistopheles says.

When I found that I was alone in that fine room, in my own room, not somebody else's room as well, I felt inexpressibly happy. I took the most careful inventory of every part of the furniture; I looked into every corner, and explored the place thoroughly. I was in the seventh heaven, happy as a king, as two kings, for the matter of that. After supper, — for we had supper at my uncle's, a delightful custom that has gone out, as well as so many others equally charming which I regret, — I took my candle and withdrew, for I was eager to enjoy my new dwelling.

As I was undressing it seemed to me that Omphale's eyes moved. I looked more attentively, feeling a slight tremor, for the room was large and the faint light of the candle served merely to render the darkness more palpable. I thought I noticed that she had turned her head the other way. I began to get really frightened, blew out the light, turned towards the wall, pulled the sheet over my head, drew my night-cap down to my chin, and managed at last to go to sleep.

For several days I did not venture to look at the dreaded tapestry.

I ought perhaps to explain to my fair readers, so that the improbable story I am going to relate may appear less improbable, that at this time I was really quite a good-looking youngster. I had the finest eyes in the world, at least so I have been told; a better complexion than I have now, a regular carnation complexion; brown, curly hair, of which I can still boast, and I was seventeen years of age, which I am not now. All I needed to make a very fair Cherubino was a pretty godmother. Unfortunately my own was fifty-seven years old, and had only three teeth left; too many in the one case, and too few in the other.

One evening, however, I did screw up my courage

to the point of casting a glance at Hercules' fair mistress. She was gazing at me with the saddest and most languorous look possible. This time I pulled my night-cap down to my shoulders and shoved my head under the bolster.

That night I had a strange dream — supposing it was a dream. I heard the curtain rings on my bedstead rustling on the bar, as if the curtains had been hurriedly drawn. I woke; at least in my dream I seemed to wake. But I saw no one.

The moon's wan, bluish beams entered the room and fell upon the tiling; great shadows, oddly shaped, showed on the floor and the walls. The clock struck a quarter past; the vibration did not die out for a long time; it sounded like a sigh. The ticking of the pendulum, which could be distinctly heard, was exactly like the beating of the heart of some one much moved.

I was anything but at my ease, and did not know what to make of it all.

A fierce gust of wind slammed the shutters and bent in the sash; the wood-work of the panelling creaked, and the tapestry waved. I ventured to look towards Omphale, having a vague suspicion that she had

something to do with this business. Nor was I mistaken.

The tapestry was violently agitated. Omphale left the wall, sprang lightly to the floor, and came towards my bed, taking care to keep her face towards me. I fancy I need not enlarge on my amazement, the bravest veteran would have felt a bit queer under such conditions, and I was neither old nor a soldier. Silently I awaited the outcome of the affair.

A little fluted, pearly voice sounded softly in my ear, with the dainty lisp that great ladies and people of the high air affected under the Regency: —

"Do I frighten you, dear? You are but a child, it is true, but it is not nice of you to be afraid of ladies, especially when they are young and inclined to be kind to you. It is not polite and not French, either; so you must get over your fears. Come, you little wild boy, do not look so terrified, and do not hide your head under the blankets. You will need a lot of teaching, for you are evidently very innocent, my handsome page. In my day, Cherubinos were a good deal more enterprising than you."

"Well, you see —"

"I see that it seems strange to you to behold me

here, and not there," said she, pressing lightly her white teeth upon her ruby lip and pointing to the wall with her long, slender finger. "You are right; there is something uncanny about it, but you would not understand, even if I did explain the matter to you. Let it suffice that you run no danger."

"I am afraid you may be the — the —"

"Out with it! You are afraid I may be the devil; is not that what you wanted to say? At least you must allow that I am pretty fair for a devil, and that if hell is filled with devils like me, it must be as pleasant to be there as in Paradise."

And to prove that she was not indulging in vain boasting, Omphale threw off her lion-skin and exhibited her shoulders and bosom, which were exquisitely modelled and dazzlingly white.

"Well, what do you think of that?" said she, with a little air of satisfied coquetry.

"I think that I should not be a bit afraid if you were the devil himself, Lady Omphale."

"That 's right; but you must not call me Lady, nor Omphale. I do not want to be Lady to you, and I am no more Omphale than I am the devil."

"Then who are you?"

"I am the Marchioness de T——. Some time after our marriage, my husband had this tapestry made for my apartment, and had me represented in it under the guise of Omphale, and himself as Hercules. That was a funny notion of his, for Heaven knows he was as little like Hercules as could be. This room has not been inhabited for a long time, and as I have always been fond of society, I was bored to death and had the megrims every day. For to have no company but that of one's husband is the same thing as having none. But you came, and the room at once brightened up; there was some one in whom I could interest myself. I watched you going and coming; listened to you sleeping and dreaming; I followed your reading. I thought you looked well, that you were attractive, — in short, I loved you. I tried to make you see that; I sighed, but you thought it was the wind; I made signs to you and cast the most languishing glances at you, but only managed to terrify you. At last I determined to take this very improper step and to tell you plainly what you did not guess. Now that you know that I am in love with you, I hope —"

We had got so far in our conversation when the

sound of a key was heard turning in the lock of the door.

Omphale started and blushed up to the eyes.

"Good-bye till to-morrow," she said.

And she walked backwards to her wall, no doubt because she did not want me to see the other side of her.

It was Baptiste, come to take my clothes to brush them.

"You are wrong, sir, to sleep with your bed-curtains drawn back. The room is chilly and you might catch cold in the head."

It was true that the curtains had been pulled back, which astonished me very much, for I knew they had been drawn close the night before, and I had fancied I had dreamed all that had happened.

As soon as Baptiste had gone I ran to the tapestry. I felt it all over; there was no mistake about it, it was a genuine woollen tapestry, rough to the touch like every piece of arras. Omphale was about as like the lovely phantom of the night as a corpse is like a living being. I pulled the tapestry away from the wall, but the wall was sound; there was neither a secret door nor a secret panel. I did notice, however, that a

number of threads were broken on the piece of ground on which rested Omphale's feet. This gave me food for thought.

The whole day I was singularly absent-minded. I waited for the night with mingled impatience and anxiety, and withdrew to my room very early, determined to see the business out. I went to bed, and the Marchioness did not keep me waiting. She sprang from the tapestry and came straight to my bed, seating herself near me. Then we fell into conversation.

I put questions to her, just as I had done the previous night; she eluded some, and answered the others in an evasive way, but so wittily that in the course of an hour all my scruples had vanished.

While she spoke she fondled my hair, caressed my face, and kissed me on the forehead.

She chattered away in dainty mocking fashion, in a style at once elegant and familiar, and exceedingly high-bred, which I have never met with since in any one else.

She was seated in the arm-chair by my bedside. Presently she put her arm round my neck, and I could feel her heart beating fast close to mine. She was indeed a real, beautiful, and engaging woman; it was a

living marchioness who was beside me. And I was a mere school-boy seventeen years old! It was enough to turn any one's head, and mine was turned completely. I did not quite understand what was going to happen, but I felt in a vague sort of way that the Marquis would not approve of it.

"But what will the Marquis, up on the wall, think?"

The lion skin had slipped to the floor and the pale-lilac silvery cothurns were lying beside my slippers.

"He will not say anything," replied the Marchioness, laughing heartily. "He never does see anything, and if he did, he is the most philosophical and inoffensive of husbands. He is quite used to this sort of thing. Do you love me, my dear?"

"Indeed, indeed I do."

At daybreak my mistress took her leave.

The day seemed to me terribly long, but night came at last. The same things happened over again, and the second night was in no respect inferior to the first. The Marchioness was more and more attractive, and our intercourse went on for quite a time. But as I did not sleep at night, I was all day rather somnolent, and my uncle's suspicions were awakened. Probably he listened at the door and heard the conversation between

the Marchioness and myself; at all events he entered my room so unexpectedly one morning that Antoinette had barely time to get back to her place.

He was followed by a workman carrying pincers and a ladder, and his stern, grim look made it plain to me that he knew everything.

"That Marchioness de T——, is positively crazy. What the devil put it into her head to fall in love with a youngster like that?" muttered he. "And she had so faithfully promised to behave herself! — John, take down that tapestry, roll it up, and carry it to the garret."

Every word my uncle spoke stabbed me to the heart.

John rolled up my mistress, Omphale, or the Marchioness de T——, and Hercules, or the Marquis de T——, and bundled them both up into the garret. I could not keep back my tears.

The next day my uncle sent me back by the B—— coach to my worthy parents, to whom, as will readily be imagined, I did not tell one word of my adventure.

My uncle died; his house and furniture were sold, and the tapestry probably went with the other things.

Nevertheless, some time ago, while turning over the goods in a bric à brac shop, in search of curiosities, I stumbled against a great dusty roll covered with cobwebs.

"What 's that?" said I to the dealer.

"A rococo tapestry, representing the loves of Hercules and Omphale; it is Beauvais tapestry, in silk and excellently preserved. Why do you not buy it for your study? I 'll let you have it cheap, seeing it is you."

At the name of Omphale the blood rushed to my heart.

"Unroll the tapestry," said I to the dealer, in a quick, sharp, feverish way.

It was she! There was no mistake about it. And it seemed to me that she smiled graciously at me, and that her eyes lighted up as they met mine.

"How much do you want for it?"

"I shall have to ask you four hundred francs net; that is the best I can do."

"I have not as much about me; I shall go and fetch the money, and be back within an hour."

When I came back with the money, the tapestry was gone. An Englishman had come in, had offered six hundred francs for it, and had carried it off.

Perhaps it is as well that things turned out so, and that I was thus enabled to preserve her sweet remembrance untouched. They say that one should not go back over one's first love, or go to see again the rose admired the day before.

Then I am no longer young enough or good-looking enough for figures to come down out of the tapestry in my honour.

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JACK AND JILL

Introduction

GOETHE has said somewhere that there are but thirty-six situations from which tragic writers have to choose the one they prefer to put upon the stage. There may be more in comedy, yet the situations that command the attention and interest of the public are after all not very numerous, and may without much trouble be reckoned up by any one having the time and inclination to pursue the task.

The subject of the first of the four tales comprised in the present volume, "Jack and Jill," or, to give its French name, "Jeanne et Jeannette," is identical with that of two masterpieces by two eighteenth-century authors, the one French, the other English: Marivaux and Goldsmith, whose "She Stoops to Conquer" and "The Game of Love and Chance" are known to every reader of literature.

In many respects Marivaux' refined and delicate

play surpasses that of Goldsmith, though both works faithfully reflect the manners of the country, and the age in which the action is laid, and also the individuality of the author. But it must be said of the Frenchman's masterpiece that the subject, which presents in its treatment certain difficulties apparent on the least reflection, has been handled by him with a fuller sense of its possibilities than by his English successor.

It is scarcely necessary to do more than briefly recall the outline of "She Stoops to Conquer," with which every English-reading person is, or ought to be, quite familiar. Marlow and Hastings are directed by the loutish Tony Lumpkin to Hardcastle Hall as to a country inn kept by a conceited old fellow who claims acquaintance and relationship with the gentry. Marlow, bold as brass in the company of women of the town and female servants, is diffident and ill at ease in the society of virtuous and modest ladies. He mistakes Kate Hardcastle, dressed in somewhat plain clothes, for the maid, and makes love to her after the manner of the bucks and blades of his day, and with the same intentions. The girl sees her chance of indulging in the sport of fooling him, and her feminine vanity — the characteristic trait depended upon by both

authors — induces her to attempt to lead him to make her an offer of his heart and hand under more regular conditions than he has himself intended. She succeeds in doing so by working upon Marlow's feelings, and after having turned him into ridicule to his face and behind his back, reveals her real rank in a fairly well contrived scene.

In Marivaux' play, there is none of the coarseness of purpose, express or implied, met with in "She Stoops to Conquer," and the crucial situation is brought about far more naturally as well as far more artistically. It is curious to observe that of two plays written by two men in the same age, it is the French one which shines by its dainty delicacy and purity of refinement, while the other is chiefly marked by a certain grossness of humour and broadness of farce.

Marivaux has wholly avoided doing what Goldsmith, writing years later, did not perceive was a fault from the artistic point of view: he has not made his hero ridiculous at any point of the play. Silvia, a young lady of noble family, desires, before pledging her faith for life, to know something of the husband who has been chosen for her by her father. She has seen so much unhappiness in the homes of the married people

she knows that she not unnaturally dreads the experiment she is asked to undertake and from which there is no escape if it prove unfortunate. She therefore begs her father's leave to change places and dresses with her own maid, — one of those smart and clever soubrettes which the French stage evolved out of the tragedy confidante and the comedy *suivante*, — so that she may have the opportunity of studying her suitor's character while he is paying court to the woman he must necessarily suppose is the one he is to marry. She looks forward, besides, to more than one chance of obtaining private and most valuable information concerning that character from the valet of the Marquis, who must know him intimately, and be in a position to furnish information about him of absolutely priceless value. She recognises the fact that it may be at times a little awkward for her to flirt with the valet, a consequence of her change of dress and rank from which there is no apparent escape, but reassures herself by the consideration that there will be something about her that will keep the fellow within the bounds of respect.

Luckily for her, and for the spectator and reader, a precisely similar idea has occurred to Dorante. He

also feels no inclination to wed a young woman of whom he knows nothing save that she is the daughter of his father's old friend, that she has been educated in a fashionable convent, that she is pretty, and capable of doing honour to her husband by her wit and beauty. He has accordingly sought and obtained leave from his father to assume the dress and station of his own valet, — who is to sport his master's costume and title, — with the view of examining the young lady, unknown to her, before he makes up his mind to carry out the engagement conditionally settled upon by the two seniors. This fact is communicated confidentially to Silvia's sire by Dorante's father, and leads the former to grant readily the permission asked for by his daughter; for he hopes that the two young people, meeting as valet and maid, and wholly unsuspicious of each other's real quality, may thus learn to love each other and make a match of it.

It will readily be understood that the situation thus created is full of possibilities, and of these Marivaux most skilfully availed himself. The expected happens, and the aristocratic Silvia finds herself taking an interest in the young and handsome valet which surprises and shocks her, for she has not the remotest idea of

marrying beneath herself. On the other hand, the Marquis falls in love with her at first sight, and though he struggles manfully against a passion which, under the circumstances, he may not indulge, he finally casts to the winds all prejudices of race and education, and offers his hand, his heart, and his fortune to the bewitching maid, whose happiness and delight on discovering that she has given her affections not to a valet, but to a man of her own rank, may more easily be imagined than described by any other pen than Marivaux' own dainty one.

It would be out of place to compare here the French and the English plays, and to enumerate the reasons why the former is superior to the latter. Enough that Gautier, who had read both, — though one of them, of course, in a translation only — chose to abide by the main idea of "The Game of Love and Chance" instead of adopting that of "She Stoops to Conquer." It is thus that he built up his story of "Jack and Jill," varying it in details, but keeping to the principle of making the same notion of disguise occur to the two principals. He has separated himself from Marivaux in the motive that leads the Viscount on the one hand and the Marchioness on the other to throw aside the

dress of their rank in society, and he has managed their meeting, in utter unconsciousness of their real condition, with infinite success. Out of the elements he found in the eighteenth-century play, he has wrought one of the prettiest and purest stories he ever wrote, and introduced into it, by means of the characters of the Abbé, the Chevalier, the Commander, the financier, and the druggist's son, that amount of comicality that Marivaux got out of the love-making between the real valet and the real maid, and Goldsmith mainly out of Tony Lumpkin and his boorish pranks.

It is curious to see how Gautier turned more than once to the eighteenth century, to the times immediately preceding the Revolution, with evident pleasure and satisfaction. The story of "The Marchioness's Lap-dog" is laid in that period, and in some respects is more characteristic of the days when it was most unfashionable — indeed, exceedingly bad form — for a husband to be in love with his wife, or a wife to be attached to her husband; a deep-rooted prejudice which Nivelle de la Chaussée turned to good dramatic account in one of the two plays of his that bear reading nowadays, "The Fashionable Prejudice." In that

tale, Gautier painted the age as it was, with its frivolity, its brilliancy, its corruption. In this one he has shown another side of the period that is not often dwelt upon but which none the less existed. The splendour and beauty of the aristocratic life so dazzled every one, the Court was so wholly and exclusively the centre of attraction and attention, that the life of the middle class was practically ignored. There is all the more interest, therefore, in the glimpses he has given us of it, in so far as it suited his purpose to do so, and the contrast between the licentious, if witty and polished, drawing-rooms and the simple but decent pleasures of the humbler sphere is distinctly refreshing.

It is not Marivaux: Gautier, no more than the many others who have tried, since it was recognised that Marivaux' style was by no means an easy one to copy, could get just the right touch to render the delicacy of refined feeling in the depicting of which the eighteenth-century author excelled. But it is a good approach to the graceful manner of the elder writer, and a bright and entertaining story well told in a lively vein. If it is inspired by the "Game of Love and Chance," Gautier has made no attempt to disguise the fact and to claim the credit of inventing a situation

which, after all, is any man's possession, so long as he can impart to it novelty and freshness; and this Gautier has certainly done. For there is something entirely his own in this version of the old, old story, which one would look for in vain either in Marivaux' or in Goldsmith's work: the love and appreciation of nature. The description of the morning ramble in the Prés-Saint-Gervais after the ball is a fresh and sweet spring idyll, that contrasts delightfully with the drawing-room scene and the supper party at the Opera dancer's.

The second tale need not detain us long. It is a clever pasticcio of the style of the "Thousand and One Nights," with the touch of fantasy that Gautier was so fond of adding to many of his stories.

But the two tales from the "Jeunes France" merit a word of comment. Gautier was in his youth an ardent, an exaggerated Romanticist. There is abundant proof of the fact not only in the volumes which precede the present one, but in his numerous confidences on the subject. He was so enthusiastic, so thorough-paced that the reputation clung to him through life, long after he had abandoned and disapproved the early excesses of the school's most eager disciples. He remained Romanticist in the sense of

retaining all that was permanently valuable in the principles and practice of the school, which had so largely benefited art in all its forms. But he was among the first to recognise the absurdity of much that was done under the name of Romanticism, whether in literature, painting, dress, or language.

Alfred de Musset, the spoiled child of the company, had broken away and laughed lightly at local colour and rich rimes. Gautier had a more important work to accomplish; his mission was the vindication of the Beautiful and its protection against exaggeration and absurdity. The slap-dash work that so readily passed muster as the product of genius could not satisfy so exacting a mind as his or a taste so true as that which enabled him to perceive the varied forms of beauty. Then, he could not help seeing the folly of much of the writing which was turned out, even by writers of established reputation, and the uncommonly improbable situations they described.

It is this sort of thing that he has caricatured in the tale entitled "The Bowl of Punch," while he has touched more upon the ridicule of mediæval affectation in "Daniel Jovard." There was at the time of the apotheosis of Romanticism a strong tendency to go to

excess in everything, and provided only the Philistine could be shocked, the adepts of the new school did not scruple to compose the most astounding accounts of bacchanalian revels, freely imitated from the revels of the days of the Renaissance. To get drunk, if a man, to be unchaste in the boldest and most open manner, if a woman, seemed to be the highest ideals of some of the writers who commanded a certain amount of public attention.

There was a great deal of nonsense and an abundant play of lively imagination in all this. The young fellows who went about clad like guys were really not as licentious and abandoned as they would have had the gaping oafs of the public believe, and vice was not more rampant among women than it is now. But it was the mode of the moment; it was Byronic; it was wholly opposed to the quiet and sedate ideals of life of the bourgeoisie, and therefore it was easy to make a sensation and to attract attention by indulging in wild excesses — in print. It is this, and the cognate nonsense of fancying one's self a great man because of a few poems published and unread in some obscure paper, that Gautier has satirised so keenly in "Daniel Jovard" and "The Bowl of Punch." Reybaud, in

his "Jérôme Paturot," did something analogous and raised a good-humoured laugh at the expense of the Romanticists. But he does not hit as hard as does Gautier in these two exceedingly amusing stories.

"Elias Wildmanstadius" is not a satire; it is a kindly, an affectionate picture of a man who gained and retained Gautier's respect and affection, and this fact accounts for the wholly different tone of the sketch. There were men fully convinced of the deep and abiding truth of the principles of the Romanticist school, and of them was Célestin Nanteuil, who was long and brilliantly associated with the works of all the famous men who marched under the standard that Victor Hugo proudly bore aloft. He deserved to be remembered affectionately and gratefully, for he had done yeoman service in the cause.

"Elias Wildmanstadius" appeared in 1833, in the full flush of the Romanticist triumph, in a publication called *Les Annales Romantiques*, and in the following year was included in the volume of "Les Jeunes France." This collection of tales had also been published in 1833, by the great editor of the Romanticists, Eugène Renduel. Originally the tales were to have been written by a company of friends and were

to appear under the title "Contes du Bousingo," but in the end they were all done by Gautier.

"The Thousand and Second Night" appeared in *Le Musée de Famille*, in the summer of 1842, and "Jack and Jill" in the *Presse*, from July 9 to July 26, 1850.

Jack and Jill

JACK AND JILL

I

THE Marchioness de Champrosé is dressing; her maids are tiring her hair, the complicated dressing of which is drawing to a close. A cloud of powder *à la maréchale* flies from the swansdown puffs, while the Marchioness protects her eyes from it by hiding her lovely face in an apple-green morocco leather cover, to the great despair of the Abbé, who protests against such an eclipse.

The operation is over at last; the Marchioness's pale golden hair, combed up in porcupine fashion on top of the head, and lightly crimped on either side of the face, has disappeared under the white powder that harmonises admirably with the pastel tone of her skin. A long, slightly curled lock, called a repentance, falls adown her neck and plays upon her partially uncovered bosom.

Mme. de Champrosé puts down the unwelcome cover, and her pretty face, blooming like the rose,

shows in all its brilliancy. The Abbé is transported with delight; he has risen abruptly from the easy-chair in which he was stretched out, and is fluttering about the room. In his joy he stumbles over the furniture, upsets the porcelain ornaments, gets in the way of the maids, starts the little dog and the monkey, terrified by his turbulence, barking and chattering; he casts into a corner the objectionable cover, which he calls the extinguisher of the Graces, and takes his stand to note in a good light the Marchioness's charms.

"Truly, Marchioness," says the enthusiastic Abbé, "that mode of dressing the hair becomes you wondrously well. Cupid himself has given you your complexion, and your eyes are particularly bright to-day."

"Do you think so, Abbé?" answers the Marchioness, simpering and glancing at the lace-framed mirror set on her dressing-table; "yet I had a very bad night and I am suffering from a dreadful headache."

"I wish the Baroness had headaches that gave her a blooming complexion and made her look lovelier than Hebe. Real headaches make one have sunken eyes and a yellow complexion, and I protest yours is no genuine megrim."

"Very well, then, I have not a headache, but I have the vapours."

"By your cherry mouth, by the roses of your cheeks, by the moist brilliancy of your eyes, I maintain that you are well as can be, and that your vapours are purely imaginary."

"Abbé, you are unbearably barbarous. I am dying, and you go on overwhelming me with brutal compliments upon my blooming, healthy looks. Why do you not say at once that I am plump and red? Why do you not compare me to some ceiling divinity provided with cheeks red as the sloe and breasts like a wet-nurse?"

"Now, do not get angry. I have not seen rightly and I was admiring you on trust and through force of habit. I do now perceive that you have a woe-begone countenance, just as if it were the morning after a ball. Come, let me have that little white hand of yours and feel your pulse. I am something of a physician and my advice is not to be contemned."

With a languishing air that was in strong contrast to the lilies and the roses of her complexion, Mme. de Champrosé held out to the Abbé, who took it delicately

with his thumb and forefinger, a pretty, well shaped arm, emerging from a mass of lace. The Abbé pretended to be listening and counting the pulsations with deep attention; and if his pleasant, round face, with its laughter dimples, could possibly have looked grave, he would actually have appeared to be serious at this moment.

The Marchioness looked at him with some excitement, holding in her breath, with the air of one waiting for sentence.

"Now are you convinced?" said she, on noting the Abbé's sympathetic expression.

"Hem! hem!" quoth the Abbé. "The pulse is not at all satisfactory. That pretty little blue vein under my thumb is not acting well at all; it is remarkably irregular in its pulsations."

"I am very, very ill, am I?" sighed the Marchioness.

"Oh, no;" returned the Abbé reassuringly. "It is not a case of a serious illness such as a cold, a fever, or an inflammation of the lungs, which would fall within Tronchin's or Bordeu's province; but I suspect strongly that your spirits are affected."

"It is my spirits," cried the Marchioness, delighted at being so well understood.

"There is some love trouble in this business, and Cupid is at fault," went on the Abbé; "for the wicked little god does not always pay proper respect to marchionesses."

Whereupon Mme. de Champrosé assumed an exceedingly disdainful look and said to the Abbé: —

"A love trouble? Fie upon you! Do you take me for a person of low birth, or do I look like a love-sick shop-girl?"

"It was merely a suggestion, which I withdraw."

"I am afraid you have been keeping bad company for some time past, and that you are frequenting the middle classes, else you would not bring such an accusation against me."

"It is possible that you are tired of being a widow, and that you suffer from being lonely at night in this great house."

"There is no doubt that you are becoming stupid," said the Marchioness, with bright, clear, silvery laughter, filled with the artless insolence of a high-born dame.

"Then what is the matter with you? My diagnosis is evidently wrong, and my skill fails to serve me."

"I am bored," replied the Marchioness, as she sank back in her arm-chair.

On hearing this the Abbé's face assumed an expression of utter astonishment; his dimples disappeared, and he cast on Mme. de Champrosé an anxious and questioning glance. The eighteenth century was not wont to be bored, for it had its Chinese monsters, its porcelains, its wrought panels, its dainty suppers, its easy conquests, its salacious songs, its libertine water-colours, its sofas, its snuff-boxes, its nymphs, its lap-dogs, and its philosophers. It really had not much time to feel bored, that joyous eighteenth century; and so it was that the Marchioness's remark struck consternation to the Abbé's breast, for he could not understand it.

"It is utterly improbable that a marchioness with two hundred thousand a year, lovely, and a widow at eighteen after having been married to a husband like that, should declare that she feels bored," said the Abbé, as he pointed to an oval pastel in which grimaced, in full warlike panoply, the yellow, dried-up, and wrinkled face of a man over sixty years of age.

"It is true, though."

"You, whose life is a succession of smiles, enjoyments, and pleasures — you are bored?"

"How am I to get rid of such a condition?"

"Try changing your monkey for a marmoset, and your pug-dog for a spaniel."

"Not a bad notion; I shall try it, but I am afraid it will not prove wholly efficacious."

"If I were you, I should change the hangings in this room; there is something too languorous about blue that induces reverie. A brighter shade would better accord with your state of mind; pale rose, for instance."

"Yes, pale rose, glazed with silver, would help me somewhat to throw off my gloomy thoughts. I shall send for my decorator; but in the meanwhile find something that will amuse me."

"Shall I read to you? Your table is covered with pamphlets, books, and ana by all sorts of authors. Not that I have any good opinion of these scribblers and hack-writers, but sometimes among the wretched stuff these fellows bring out, there are funny things one may laugh at without committing one's self. Here are 'The Bell,' 'The Skimmer,' and 'Cythera's Matins,'" said the Abbé, as he turned the leaves of these volumes. "Would you like to hear the discourse wherein Mustacha, the fairy, transformed into a mole by the revengeful genie Jonquil, enumerates the perfections of Prince

Cormoran, her lover, to Tanzaï and Neardana? It is a fine passage."

The Marchioness de Champrosé nodded in assent, settled herself in her easy-chair, stretched her little feet, shod with slippers that a Chinese lady would not have found too large, upon a footstool, and seemed to resign herself to listen to the reading of the masterpiece.

The Abbé began with the panegyric of Cormoran, by Mustacha, in a mincing and superlatively pretentious tone: —

"'He was the loveliest dancer in the world. No one bowed with such grace; he guessed every riddle, played every game equally well, whether it was a game of skill or of strength, from nine-holes to hand-ball. His features were charming, and packed, if one may use the expression, with the rarest of attractions, and he could accompany his lovely voice upon any manner of instrument.

"'Besides the talents I have just enumerated, he wrote verse daintily. His conversation, whether serious or lightsome, satisfied equally by its grace and its solidity. With prudes austere, with coquettes free, with the tender-hearted melancholy, he excited the jealousy of every lady at Court.

"'The superiority of his mind did not make him unsociable; wittily complaisant, he adapted himself to all persons; he excelled every one in the knowledge of the brilliant jargon, and there was no one but revelled in listening to him. Although the stand-off creature called common-sense, did not ever act civilly towards what he said, the incomparable elegance of his speech caused it to lose nothing of its value, or else he concealed common-sense behind such a wondrous multitude of words brought out to the best advantage, that it would have appeared sickeningly insipid to its most absurd partisans, had it been less lightly attired.'"

A slight yawn, politely repressed, contracted Mme. de Champrosé's face, though at first she had smiled upon the recital of Cormoran's engaging qualities.

"'And indeed,'" went on the Abbé, "'reason is vulgar; it ever appears to be just what it is; it dreads losing itself in playfulness, and does not fail to spring back when a curiously turned idea presents itself or a luminous piece of imagination finds its way into the heart.

"'And if it does triumph, it is in a manner so insulting to humanity, and the best-bred self-love finds itself so decried by it, so deprived of its graces, and

acquires so poor an opinion of itself, that it would be ridiculous indeed not to break with it.' "

"That will do, Abbé; that will do," said the Marchioness, a coquettish yawn revealing every one of her lovely white teeth. "What you are reading is undoubtedly very pretty, but I cannot understand a single word of it, and I do not feel like trying to do so."

The book was returned to the table. Visitors were announced: the little Chevalier de Verteuil, the stout Commander de Livry, Bafogne the financier, a Midas who had not ass's ears, though he deserved to wear them, and who turned whatever he touched into gold.

All agreed that Mme. de Champrosé's eyes looked heavy and her appearance such as to justify anxiety, though she was as pretty as ever. The little Chevalier alone objected and said it was discreditable to French youth that a lovely Marchioness should be bored to death in the full tide of the joyous reign of Louis XV the Well-Beloved.

It was agreed that a drive would do her good, and that the air of the boudoir, laden as it was with the scent of amber, was telling on her nerves, gave her the vapours, and induced innumerable disorders which the open air would infallibly dispel. The Chevalier

undertook to be extravagantly funny; the Commander promised he would not speak of his conquests; Bafogne affirmed that he would understand the Chevalier's improper jokes after three repetitions of them only; and as for the Abbé, who was called off elsewhere, he undertook to meet the company at the keeper's lodge, by the swing-bridge, where the company were to dine on their way back from the Cours-la-Reine to the Opera.

II

EVERYTHING was carried out as arranged. The four cream-coloured horses were harnessed to the pale lilac coach, varnished by Martin, and the shape of which recalled that of Venus's shell.

The Marchioness lay in all her languishing grace upon the white velvet cushions; the Chevalier told the most outrageous stories in singularly piquant and marvellously turned language. He tore to tatters the characters of their acquaintances and friends, the Court and the City, and told scandalous stories with uncommonly vivacious details, veiled just enough not to compel the Marchioness's modesty to take refuge behind her fan.

The Commander was on the point of telling of his intrigue with a chorus girl, when he stopped himself in the nick of time, and the financier was no more stupid than was to be expected of him.

The coachman forced aside every other carriage with incredible insolence, that showed he was in high employ and would be backed up by his mistress. Everything

went off well. The keeper had done wonders; the dinner was declared exquisite, and the wines were choice, so at least said the Abbé, who piqued himself upon being a gourmet and incapable of being fooled in such matters.

At the Opera, "Amorous Ind" was sung with less shrieking than usual, thanks to the criticisms of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the citizen of Geneva, who, in his writings, had fallen foul of the *urlo francese:* and the dancers performed a ballet in which the sentiment of love was translated into voluptuous, though decent, postures, which filled the soul with soft languor, and reached the heart through the medium of the eyes. Yet when Mme. de Champrosé returned home pretty late that night, she still felt bored.

Was the Marchioness, then, of an atrabilious and cynical temperament, an unsociable person always taking things the wrong way and brooding in solitude upon fancied slights?

Mme. de Champrosé was of illustrious family, and having always lived in the best of society, and therefore free from the prejudices that would otherwise have prevented her seeking happiness in pleasure, she did not indulge in romantic ideas. Yet she could not con-

ceal from herself that she knew beforehand the jokes the Chevalier would get off, and the airs that would be sung in " Amorous Ind."

Many a time already had she gone to drive in the Cours-la-Reine in an open coach, preceded by her runner Almanzor, a light-footed Basque who ran like a deer, nor was it the first time she had supped at the keeper's lodge ; nevertheless, though she was not inclined to favour innovations in bad taste, the Marchioness did wish she could find some diversion that would prove more piquant.

When Justina came in to make her ready for bed, she found her mistress looking very woe-begone, and in the character of a favourite maid whose faithful service entitles her to be a little familiar, she ventured on a few questions, to which the Marchioness replied with the frankness of heart that marks a person who is suffering and seeks relief from her pain by telling of it. The Marchioness de Champrosé, who, two years before, had lost her husband, a man for whom, on account of the difference in age between them, she could feel respect only, had not, it is true, had any accepted lover, but had allowed herself to be courted somewhat hotly ; and it may be that Justina, had she

not been discretion itself, might have affirmed that if her mistress resembled any of the characters of antiquity, it was assuredly not the lovely Artemisia, the widow of Mausoleus.

Having listened to her mistress's tale of woe, Justina said most respectfully : —

" It looks as if your ladyship were without a lover at present."

" I am, my poor Justina," replied Mme. de Champrosé in a tone of discouragement.

" It is your ladyship's own fault, for there is no lack of suitors, and I personally know of a company of the best-born who are wistfully gazing upon your ladyship's perfection."

" I suppose I am not a fright yet," returned the Marchioness, casting a glance at a mirror.

" The Chevalier de Verteuil is madly in love with your ladyship."

" How much did he pay you to tell me so when I rise and when I retire ? "

" Your ladyship is aware that I am disinterestedness itself. I feel for the Chevalier, that is all. But if he does not happen to take your ladyship's fancy, there is also the Commander de Livry, who adores your ladyship."

"Yes, he is a little fonder of me than of Rose or Désobry. I do not care whether the Chevalier and the Commander are madly in love with me or not, so long as I am not in love with either of them. I wish I could love some one who is young, hale, pure, artless, who still believes in sentiment, and who has loved no one but me. I object to sharing affection with Opera girls and courtesans."

"Your ladyship desires something very difficult, if not impossible, to find," returned Justina.

"Why should it be so, Justina?"

"Because neither dukes, nor marquesses, nor viscounts, nor chevaliers possess the gifts needed to offer your ladyship such a love as your ladyship desires."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. Women throw themselves at their heads through vanity, interest, or coquetry; these men have their pockets full of love-letters, portraits, and locks of hair; and then, as your ladyship truly remarks, the Opera is a terrible place for facile amours."

"So in your opinion, Justina, men of quality are not capable of a passion such as I wish to excite?"

"Not in the least, and unless your ladyship marries

beneath her rank, I am much afraid she will not realize her ideal."

"Marry beneath my rank! What are you thinking of, Justina?"

"I am not advising your ladyship to do so; I merely say it is so."

"I could not marry any one beneath the rank of a baron."

"Barons are wholly devoid of artlessness, and some of them are worse than the dukes even."

"Then I shall choose my suitor among the esquires."

"Esquires are getting pretty bad nowadays."

"Well, I certainly cannot marry a man of the middle class!"

"That is the only kind of man who would love you."

"What nonsense!"

"Love forms the wealth of us people who are nobodies, and who have neither titles, nor mansions, nor coaches, nor diamonds, nor lupanars in the suburbs."

"You are quite excited!"

"We have to be satisfied with love, for pleasure is too expensive."

"And you have a very tender, very devoted, very faithful lover of your own, no doubt."

"I shall not venture to contradict your ladyship."

"Some prince of the livery, I suppose; my runner Almanzor, or Azolan, the Marquis's groom?"

"No indeed, your ladyship. The servants in a great house become almost as bad as their masters."

"Who is he, then?"

"A very ordinary young fellow, a shopman by trade, whose only beauty is rude health and whose only merit is that he loves me faithfully."

"That is the right way to love. You are a very happy girl."

"Indeed I am, especially on the days when your ladyship allows me to go out. Now this evening, if your ladyship could spare me, I could go to a small dance at the Moulin-Rouge, in honour of my cousin's wedding."

"Is your cousin pretty?"

"Pretty as a picture; blue eyes, long lashes, and the most innocent expression."

"What sort of people will there be at your dance?"

"Oh, very fine people indeed; bourgeois who own their houses, daughters and sons of tradesmen, con-

stables' and attorneys' clerks; there are to be a fiddler and a fifer and a tambourine player; supper will be served, and when the morning comes the whole company is to go to the Prés-Saint-Gervais to pick lilacs."

"You really make me feel like going to the ball myself; it would distract me. It must be funny to see that class of people."

"If your ladyship thinks she would enjoy it, nothing would be easier to manage. Your ladyship could wear a dress of mine and pass for my friend. With my striped pink and white paduasoy frock and jacket, a lawn kerchief, a low chignon, and a lace cap, your ladyship would be completely disguised and yet still beautiful."

"You flatterer! But do you think your dress would fit me?"

"We are much of a size, only your ladyship has a smaller waist than mine; but with a few pins and a tuck or two, the matter can be managed."

Mme. de Champrosé, aroused by a piquant fancy, was no longer the die-away lady she had been a moment before. She had lost her languishing look and her sleepy ways; her eyes were shining and her small coral nostrils were dilated.

She herself aided Justina to draw on her shapely legs fine pearl gray stockings with red clocking, and put on dainty little shoes adorned with silver buckles. The complicated head-dress, raised that morning with so much care and labour, was undone in a twinkling, but Mme. de Champrosé lost none of her loveliness in consequence.

It turned out that Justina's dress fitted her ladyship admirably well. In those days ladies' maids, taking pattern by the soubrettes of comedy, took the liberty of having figures as good as their mistresses', and at times better than theirs, though the latter was not the case with Justina, for Mme. de Champrosé did not owe her charms to the mysterious resources of skilful building up. She had nothing to conceal, nothing to make up, and remained pretty, even to her maid, contrary to those heroes who are not heroes to their valets.

Justina sent for a hackney coach which was brought to a small door in the garden; the Marchioness, carefully wrapped up in a pigeon's-breast cloak, with the hood drawn down over her face, jumped lightly into the coach, and the driver whipped up his thin steeds in the direction of the Moulin-Rouge, thinking he had two ladies' maids out on a spree for a fare.

III

JUST about the time when Mme. de Champrosé was leaving her mansion, after disguising herself in the dress of a shop-girl in her Sunday best, a supper party was going on at Mlle. Guimard's, a celebrated dancer of the Royal Academy of Dancing and Singing.

Among the guests were a number of noblemen, bearing the most illustrious names in France, who did not disdain to seek relaxation in the rooms of "the damned beauty," as M. de Marmontel called her, after having been bored in more decent society.

The dining-room, decorated with a taste that did honour to the famous courtesan, and with a richness that did equal honour to the lavishness of M. de S——, combined everything that cultured luxury can place at the disposal of refined elegance. The most precious marbles had been collected at great expense, and adorned the walls, on which gilded frames, suitably placed, but devoid of the overloading characteristic of tax-farmers and financiers, contained paintings suited to

the destination of the apartment, and due to the light and soft brush of Fragonard, the pupil of the Graces, and painter in ordinary to Terpsichore: little bare Cupids swished with roses, piling up the gifts of Ceres, Bacchus, and Pomona in baskets; one of them even receiving from the hands of Amphitrite various fishes of diverse colours, among others a lobster that was pinching its fingers and causing it to make the sweetest little face imaginable; wreaths of flowers and fruits, touched in with as much skill as deftness, connected these medallions, on which the painter had lavished all his art out of gratitude to his fair patron.

The table was served with incredible taste: it was covered with early fruits and vegetables, rare dishes and exquisite dainties in profusion. The wines of Aï and Sillery, that truly French wine which laughs in the glass and seems to sparkle with witticisms, were cooling in silver urns chased by Germain, and, being frequently renewed, kept up the gaiety of the guests.

People less accustomed to such magnificence would have forgotten the excellent cheer in the contemplation of the centrepiece, a masterpiece of Clodion's, in which the sculptor, who excels in that kind of work, had fairly surpassed himself. It was of gilt bronze, and

represented the story of the nymph Syrinx, pursued through the reeds by the great god Pan. The example set by the libertine god was followed by numerous ægipans, satyrs, and fauns who were teasing, provoking, kissing, and upsetting Syrinx's companion nymphs upon reeds and beds of foliage that formed pretty motives for ornaments. The freedom of the execution, the voluptuousness of the attitudes, and the passionate gestures of the figures made them lifelike, and proved that the sculptor was endowed with a most lively imagination and marvellous skill in matters of gallantry. The nymphs, in particular, were charming; their modesty, though startled, was not outrageously stand-off.

In her emotion Syrinx was betraying delightfully the very charms she sought to conceal, the reeds and grasses closing or opening at the right moment, allowing everything to be seen without showing anything.

Connoisseurs pretended that they recognised in the faces of the nymphs the features of a number of fashionable beauties, nor was there anything improbable in the fact, and in the faces of the satyrs and the ægipans the features of tax-farmers, financiers, and even of certain aged noblemen notorious for their lecherousness.

The company was not very numerous, but it was select, consisting of four or five gentlemen, and about the same number of ladies.

As I have already stated, the former belonged to the highest society, to the most prominent families at Court. As for the ladies, they were courtesans, lost women, actresses, to whom the stage was but a pretext, for, no one knows why, when the best society wants to amuse itself, it is compelled to have recourse to the worst, which leads to the conclusion, that morality cannot approve of, that vice is pleasanter than virtue.

Mlle. Guimard presided over the supper with the witty grace, the voluptuousness, and the vivacity that made her the high priestess of pleasure, a religion that had but few atheists in the lascivious eighteenth century.

Her thinness, for which she was famous, was due to her training for the dance; she had been willing to sacrifice some of her feminine plumpness to the lightness called for by her profession; but this thinness, which was in no wise unpleasant, showed in the form of elegance, gracefulness, and slenderness. Her figure, freed from superfluous charms, was held naturally

within a small bodice, slim as a butterfly's body, and her sparkling skirt seemed to form the wings. Her delicate, diaphanous hand toyed with diamond rings that a child of ten could not have slipped on her fingers. Her bosom, boldly exposed, exhibited the most delightful nothingness, and never, it may be affirmed, had nothingness been lovelier. Her white and slender neck had a nobility of its own, and she carried her head after the manner of a bird or a flower.

The brilliant eyes, illumined with maddest fancies, that animated her face, the rouge flushing without impairing it, the delicate pallor of her complexion, — enabled one to guess how many millions must have been squandered, and how many fortunes wrecked in order to reach such passionate thinness. Many women have been endowed with the taste for luxury and pleasure; Guimard had a genius for them.

The complexion of the three other women was of that pastel tone formed of a rose and white touch veined with azure, eyes that cast sidelong glances laden with mockery or desire, noses of that irregular form which is neither Greek nor Roman, and marks the possession of

wit and of a capricious disposition; mouths ready to kiss or quiz; dimples in which laughter welcomes love, and mobile, wide-awake, piquant features thoroughly in accord with the manners, art, and fashions of the day, but which are no longer to be met with.

The soft, delicate shades of their dress, most delightfully fanciful, covered as it was with knots of ribbons, bows, gems, and flowers, were pleasant to the eye, for in view of the time of year these ladies wore spring apple-green, rose, and pale blue gowns. Mlle. Guimard alone was in vestal white, no doubt by way of contrast, and the only colour about her was the ruby of her lips and the flush on her cheeks. The whole light was concentrated upon her, as if to mark her out as the queen of the entertainment. Fragonard himself, had he undertaken to make a painting of the party, would not have arranged the groups or contrasted the colours in any different manner.

It is quite certain that if a young fellow, or even a man of mature age, were asked if he knew of any pleasanter way of killing time than to enjoy an excellent supper in a brilliantly lighted room, with the wits of the Court and the loveliest actresses from the Opera and the Comédie, he would reply in the negative, and

affirm that nothing can be compared to the delight of drinking toasts in champagne to the reigning beauty, while seated between two richly gowned nymphs who laugh and flush under their rouge with happiness and enjoyment.

IV

NEVERTHELESS this sort of diversion appeared to give very little pleasure to Viscount de Candale, for he lay back in his chair, waiting, with careless, unhappy mien, until the foam that sparkled in the delicate crystal of his glass should have vanished, ere he put it to his lips and acknowledged the toast which the beauteous Guimard, standing and resting her little hand upon the table, had just proposed: —

"To the health of Viscount Candale, better known as the *Beau ténébreux*."

"Ay! to the health of the new Amadis of Gaul!" shouted the other guests in chorus as they pledged the Viscount.

The latter, having touched with his glass that of each of the revellers, drained it in silence and put it down.

"Has the dear Viscount," said a pretty woman, whose naturally vivacious eyes were brightened by a skilful touch of rouge under the eyelid, "has the dear Viscount heard any bad news? Has perchance the

uncle whose heir he is, who appeared to realise how ridiculous it is of him not to die when he is seventy years old, dismissed his physicians and taken a new lease of life?"

"Hold your tongue, Cidalise," returned a tall girl in apple-green taffeta, with silver glacé, who formed an absolute contrast to her neighbour. "M. de Candale is not yet so low in funds as to have to long for an inheritance. Like the incomparable eldest son that he is, he is still engaged in spending his own, and has enough to carry him on for another five years of Opera loves."

"Oh!" went on Cidalise, "when his money gives out he will be loved on credit, in return for promissory notes to be paid out of his wife's dowry."

"I," said a very pretty blonde, as she bent towards the Viscount with voluptuous abandon, "I shall love him for his own sake."

"Very nice, indeed, Rosette," answered Candale, as he patted in friendly fashion the young woman's nude and quivering shoulder. "Yet, in such circumstances I think I should prefer to declare my love to Cidalise, and to pledge my future inheritance to her on stamped paper. But you need not be alarmed, any one of you;

I am not in worse financial condition than usual, and I still have in reserve some thousands of louis to be thrown away."

"Then what is the matter with you, Candale?" said Mlle. Guimard, breaking in upon the conversation. "You are dreadfully dull and wholly unlike your ordinary self. Instead of being ready at repartee, as is your custom, you are frightfully serious, and you are sitting at supper with the mien of a judge on the bench. We are not trying anybody, my dear."

"The truth is poor Candale does look uncommonly woe-begone, and is gazing with but indifferent interest upon the bottles and the beauties," cried the Marquis de Valnoir, who already betrayed the effects of his numerous libations to Bacchus, and had been several times rapped over the fingers by his neighbour, who, nevertheless, was anything but a prude.

"I shall make him confess to me," said blonde Rosette, taking the Viscount by the hand and drawing him towards a rich sofa with twisted shell legs, that stood at the end of the room and offered all possible opportunity for love conversations.

"My beloved brother," said Rosette, with a most edifying look, "first and foremost you must go down

on your knees, for such is the proper attitude when at a penitential tribunal."

"I shall not fail to do so," returned the Viscount, "especially as my confessor has such lovely eyes and so soft a voice."

And he knelt down in front of Rosette, who bent her beautiful face towards him.

"To what remorse are you a prey, that you go about in society with such a gloomy and forbidding aspect? What woman have you failed to conquer? To what innocent maid or to what husband have you shown mercy in a fit of ridiculous virtue? These are sins one ever regrets."

"I am free from all reproach on that score, for I have met no innocent maid anywhere, and as for husbands, they are so very like Vulcan that my conscience is at rest as far as they are concerned."

"Well, as you have committed none of these sins, I absolve you, and you need not remain on your knees. Sit down beside me, and for sole penance you shall kiss my hand."

Candale rose and gallantly touched with his lips Rosette's slender, plump hand.

"Now you must explain to me how you come to

wear so funereal a countenance. If it be not due to remorse, then it is to trouble of some sort. Yet what trouble can you know? Assuredly not unrequited love, for that is impossible in your case."

"You flatter me; but I have not fulfilled the conditions requisite to suffer for that, since I am not in love with anybody."

"Do you know that such a speech is neither gallant nor one that a Frenchman should make? Know, sir, that in Paris, a man of the world is always supposed to be in love with the woman he happens to be talking to."

"But you are not a woman; you are my confessor."

"Not a bit of it; you have got up off your knees and we are talking. Fie upon you, Viscount; I am a woman, and very much of a woman."

"Well, my dear, if I were in love with you I should not be sad, for you would not repel me with Hyrcanian ferocity, if I may believe what you whispered to me but a moment ago."

"What did I whisper to you?"

"That you would love me even if I were ruined."

"Quite true, but, as you are not ruined, I love you no longer; it was only in the event of your being poor that I was to bestow such alms upon you, for we, who

are constantly receiving gifts, enjoy at times making them ; it has a charm of its own."

As she spoke, Rosette's playful, mocking tone became tender, and Candale was struck by the soft glance of her lovely blue eyes.

"I do regret not being as poor as the poet! I have a great mind to go on gambling night after night in order to attain the possibility of being loved by you."

"You might win."

"Then, to give marriage portions to innocent maids, to endow academies, to create fountains in my garden, a pastime that ruins kings themselves."

"There is no necessity for all that," answered Rosette, spreading out her skirts. "If you loved me even a little bit, I should resign myself to your being rich, but you do not care a jot for me."

"That was true a moment ago, but now, I fancy, it is not," answered Candale, getting as close to Rosette as her hoops allowed and taking her hand, which she unresistingly yielded.

"Well, have you found out Candale's secret?" cried the Marquis de Valnoir as he came up with very uncertain gait, even though he was accustomed to being drunk.

Rosette and the Viscount had drawn away for a time from the tumult of the orgy.

"Yes, I have," answered Rosette, rising and leaving her hand in the Viscount's. "He has told me all his sorrows, and now I am bringing him back quite consoled."

"By Jupiter! you are a wonder! We shall have to intrust you with the cure of all despairing people," grumbled the Marquis de Valnoir, as he escorted the pair back to the table with an ironical air.

If Viscount de Candale was not wholly cured of his trouble, he certainly looked far less gloomy; his glance was bright again, he replied with much grace and wit to the pleasantries showered upon him from every part of the table, while Mlle. Guimard vowed that the maleficent vapours which had obscured the young nobleman's bright disposition had wholly disappeared, and that she had found her old Candale again.

Every one joined in pledging Rosette who had worked the miracle, the glasses being conscientiously drained to the very last drop, thanks to the watchful oversight of the Marquis de Valnoir, who carried out such libations with solemn accuracy, and would not tolerate that any one should be less drunk than he.

But in the course of the bacchanalian revel that followed upon the drinking of the toast, Rosette and Candale slipped out unnoticed, so fully was every one occupied with his or her own business.

As Rosette had intended leaving late with the friend who had brought her, she got into the Viscount's vis-à-vis. This sort of carriage appears to have been designed by Cupid for the purpose of facilitating confessions of love and gallant liberties, and many timid lovers have been indebted to the luck of a jolt for favours they would not have dared ask for. Feet touch feet, knees rub against knees, hands meet, mouths and cheeks are brought together. If the stout coachman is drunker than usual and takes a gutter at a jump, few women emerge from a vis-à-vis as virtuous as they entered it.

Now Rosette, as has been seen, was not offishly virtuous, and Candale did not lean in the direction of ascetic self-denial, yet, incredible as it may seem to my readers, I am in a position to affirm that during the whole trip, — which was rather long, for the Viscount's coachman had sense enough not to hurry his horses when the Viscount was with a pretty creature in his vis-à-vis, — Candale did not take the smallest liberty,

although Rosette often bent towards him and betrayed her emotion by stifled sighs and the rising and falling of the flowers on her bosom.

Yes; the fact, incredible in the eighteenth century, positively occurred on that night. Candale actually left Rosette at her own door without having kissed her once, and departed after bowing to her at the entrance to her apartment.

On getting back into his carriage, he said with a yawn: —

"How bored I am by suppers and women! But what am I to do with myself for the rest of the night? I have a mind to mingle with the riff-raff for a bit, and go to that ball Bonnard told me about, where some pretty girls of the middle and lower classes are to be; girls with faces more blooming than all those famous ones shining with pomades and rouge, and apparently polished like idols by the kisses of their devotees."

Rosette, who had never been treated that way in her life, fell into deep thought as her maids attired her for the night, and amazed and disgusted went to bed in solitude.

"Ah! Candale! Candale!" murmured she, as she dropped off to sleep.

V

MME. DE CHAMPROSÉ, whom I left driving off in a hackney-coach with her trusty Justina, got plenty of fun out of the jolting of the old vehicle that rocked on its worn springs; and during the trip, which was long, although the driver, handsomely paid, conscientiously whipped up his pair of Rosinantes, she kept uttering little shrieks, mingled with laughter, every time the top-heavy concern leaned over to the one side or the other; the paving of the streets being abominable, for his lordship the Lieutenant of Police was much busier routing out scandalous stories for the benefit of the King his master than in seeing to the comfort of the citizens. But they got to the place at last, for that is always what happens, even if one goes in a hackney-coach.

A little Savoyard, carrying a torch, politely helped the ladies, who stepped down off the slippery carriage-step with affected unskilfulness, so that they were able to exhibit to the people hanging about the door very neat ankles and well-fitting stockings.

Dancing had begun; the brilliant illumination of the windows of the Moulin-Rouge showed that the organisers of the dance had not been sparing of oil, which was supplied by some of them, who followed the noble trade of grocers; and the furniture men had brought settees and garlands of paper flowers, so that the room did not look so poor as might have been supposed.

The orchestra, perched upon a platform on which was spread a cover trimmed with imitation-gold ornaments, occupied the opening of a door from which the door itself had been removed. It comprised a fiddler who, after having performed at Audinot's show or at the King's Great Dancers, was not sorry to earn three francs in the course of the night by playing to the dancers of rigadoons and jigs; a tambourine player, who marked the tempo strongly in order to impress it upon ears very apt to forget it; and a flutist, who did not indulge in too many breaks.

No doubt Rameau, who has the art of inventing such learned musical combinations, might have considered the orchestra rather scant and untrained, but it was quite good enough for the purpose it had to serve, and made up for its small numbers by its zeal; the fiddler scraped the catgut furiously, worked his arms in

the most extravagant manner, and accompanied his performance with the oddest faces; the flutist swelled out his cheeks like the attendants of Æolus in the Ballet of the Winds, and blew into his pipe in a way that turned his mug a rich crimson; while the tambourine player, moving his arms like a lunatic, rapped on his ass's-skin fit to burst it; the trio, for fear of losing the tempo, stamped with their feet, like village performers, causing a cloud of dust to rise from the boards on which they sat.

By the side of the three Amphions was placed a jug of wine, from which they drank deep draughts in turn, and the host of the Moulin-Rouge kindly kept filling it up, having learned by experience that there is nothing so thirst-begetting as music, to judge by the inextinguishable thirst of musicians.

This minstrelsy, which was audible from the stairs, greatly amused Mme. de Champrosé, who, being herself no mean performer on the harpsichord, was capable of appreciating the liberties the crazy orchestra was taking with the music.

On the way she had ordered Justina not to treat her with a show of respect which would not seem natural between cousins She even insisted on her addressing

her familiarly, and as she must not be known by her real name, she had chosen that of Jill, as being most pastoral, simple, and candid.

When Justina appeared accompanied by Jill, every one eagerly hastened up to her. She presented her supposed cousin in the most natural fashion, and the gallantry of the assembly was expressed in compliments that, though not deftly turned, were nevertheless very well received. Gods, kings, and pretty women swallow all that kind of thing, and the Marchioness came to the conclusion that there was far more taste among that class of people than was supposed; for a little awkwardness in the making of madrigals is by no means disagreeable, seeing it proves sincerity, while too great a facility is apt to inspire distrust.

Thus it was that the Marchioness de Champrosé, who was little flattered when the Abbé or the Commander compared her to Hebe, blushed with pleasure when the youthful son of a druggist from the Rue Sainte-Avoie said as he passed near her: —

"Her cheeks are like peaches; one feels like eating them."

And in truth the supposed Jill was pretty, dainty, blooming, and delicate to a degree.

Although she had a princely air in her court robes, and the noble impertinence of a high-bred woman, the simple grisette dress became her even better, and she was more graceful in her short skirt than when wearing an eighteen-foot hoop.

She was infinitely more attractive now that she had thrown aside the mass of ornaments called for by fashion. Her lovely pale golden hair, instead of being crimped, pomaded, and piled up in an extravagant structure upon a framework of wire, overloaded with bows, plumes, flowers, and porcelain butterflies, was but slightly powdered and fell in a large chignon upon her white neck, while in front it was brushed back in the Chinese fashion, showing her polished and perfectly formed brow.

Mme. de Champrosé was not one of those Greek or Roman beauties who are fitter for reproduction in marble than for love. Her beautiful eyes, shining with wit, animated her bright face, which, on account of her extreme youth, could affect artlessness to perfection. Her Roxelane nose happily lacked the regularity that is so much praised, but which gives no pleasure, and as for her mouth, it was a miniature Cupid's bow, and in colour like one of the double cherries which

Jean-Jacques Rousseau cast down from the tree into Mlle. Gallet's bosom.

Although she was a very great lady, she did not look out of character as a shop-girl; her foot being small and her shoes dainty. It is a well-known fact that the Parisian grisettes, who walk so prettily, equal Andalusian marchionesses as far as the small size of their feet is concerned, and are very careful about the way they are shod. As for her hands, the fingers of which emerged from small black thread fingerless gloves, their slenderness was quite natural, for Miss Justina had said her cousin was a lace-worker, and assuredly one does not roughen one's fingers and break one's nails when busy weaving spider's-webs.

Jill became at once the belle of the ball; she had barely time to sit down on the settee against the wall, by Justina's side, before she was again invited to dance. One of her gallants had fetched her a big nosegay of royal roses, which she held in her hand as she danced, and a bud of which she had put in her bosom just at the spot where met the two ends of her kerchief. Dorat, the musketeer poet, would have said that this was done to scent the flower. Another gallant, a constable's clerk, had regaled her with a couple of oranges

and a green paper fan on the back of which was printed an air by Ernelinde. These attentions greatly amused Jill, who accepted everything with smiles and enjoyed the extraordinary sheep's-eyes and tremendous sighs of the young druggist and the clerk. She had had no idea that that sort of creature was so like men.

These middle-class people, whom she had hitherto scarcely noticed from her coach, as they swarmed in the mud or were bespattered by her coachman, or fled from a heavy shower of rain, surprised her by the almost human ways they had. She could not have believed that such animals were capable of expressing themselves intelligibly, still less that they could say sensible and even gallant things. She was just as much surprised as if her pug dog, instead of yelping, had one day taken to speaking, or if her baboon had taken part in the conversation. Indeed either of these events would have caused her less astonishment, for her pug dog was peculiarly intelligent, and her monkey superlatively clever, having been trained by the Abbé.

It was not that the Marchioness affected haughtiness or was a contemptuous person; she was not over proud of her noble rank, never spoke of her ancestors, and cared but little for her genealogical tree; but she had

never had aught to do with people other than those in her own class, who believed themselves to be made out of choice clay, and to have blood different from that of the common.

She observed that the constable's clerk had as well turned a leg as the Chevalier de Verteuil, who was always engaged in showing off his, and she was greatly astonished to note that the druggist's son, though he did not keep on grinning all the time, had just as fine teeth as the Abbé, who was very proud of his; so proud, indeed, that he would have smiled on hearing the most disastrous piece of news.

VI

"THESE boors are as handsome as noblemen, and not much more silly," said the Marchioness to herself as she accepted an invitation for the next country-dance.

Carried away by the swing and genuineness of the general feeling of enjoyment, the supposed Jill danced with all her heart, unhesitatingly held out her aristocratic hands to the red paws of her partners when hands had to be taken for the round, and was quite surprised to find that, though so high-born, she was actually enjoying herself as if she had been a mere nobody or something akin to it. She seemed to have thrown off with her hoops, her diamonds, and her rouge the languor which people of quality alone indulge in, but which the more solid constitutions of the middle classes contemn.

The artless admiration of the hobbledehoys flattered her, for it was at least sincere, if not always delicately expressed.

To all of them she was but Jill, the cousin of a

lady's maid, in the household of a very great lady, it is true, but herself not a person of rank. Where she was, the only title lay in her beautiful eyes, and her wealth was composed of her fair bosom. She was lucky not to have experienced a disappointment on assuming her incognito, a change apt to be unfavourable to many persons, even of exalted rank.

She danced gavots, minuets, and borees, trying not to display too much the graceful ways she had been taught by Marcel, and to keep to natural ones, which really became her better. Yet, though she was enjoying herself thoroughly, she had not, so far, seen any one who could fit into her plans, and among all the kindly faces there was not one that produced the desired effect.

It was the proper thing at that time, when the old-fashioned formalities that protected our ancestors' prudery had been greatly abridged, to fall in love at first sight, and it was quite understood that two hearts made for each other might come to an understanding at once without having to languish in the paying of wearisome attentions.

But however much Mme. de Champrosé might desire to fall in love at first sight, the conversation of the heir presumptive to the drug business and the

sheep's-eyes of the clerk did not charm her to such an extent as to interfere with her perfect liberty of mind and heart; and in the course of one of the figures of the country-dance she replied with a negative nod of the head to the mute interrogation of her maid, who wondered whether her mistress' fancy had been taken by any one of her gallants.

Untouched herself she had nevertheless wrought havoc among the hearts of these worthy members of the lower middle class, and the local beauties, who had shone to passable advantage before the new star had arisen, were nearly eclipsed by its light. Mlles. Javotte, Nanette, and Denise, almost forsaken by their usual admirers, were left to sulky solitude, just as though they had been dowagers or aged beings whose crown of years compelled them to play the part of wallflowers.

Yet their red cheeks were high coloured, their bosoms nearly caused their bodices to burst, and their plump legs were encased in silk stockings with red clocking; they therefore wondered how it was that a little chit, who could scarcely be called plump, who had an almost colourless complexion, could rival such robust charms and such palpable superiority as theirs. In order to

bring back the delinquent admirers, they made the most marked advances to them, squinting, by dint of casting side glances, laughing noisily with somewhat forced laughter, and Denise, even, on passing close to the young druggist, who until then had been her suitor in ordinary, discharging punctually the duties of his office, could not refrain, with the view of bringing the wandering sheep back to the fold, from indulging in what the vulgar call a nip. But the amorous druggist, engaged in conversation with Jill, proved to be as great a Stoic as the little Spartan boy who allowed the fox to eat his bowels out, and neither by cry nor gesture did he betray the fact that his flesh was being pinched by fingers that did not lack for strength and that, even if they had been weak, would have gained vigour from the anger the girl felt. He would not even look round, and Denise had to return to her settee without having obtained a smile or a look in return for her attempt.

In vain did Javotte exhibit her foot to the constable's clerk, and cause her Rhine-stone buckles to glitter in the way that never failed to elicit a compliment from the youthful attendant on Themis; this time the manoeuvre proved fruitless, for the clerk's eyes were too

well engaged elsewhere to lower themselves so far, and Mlle. Javotte had her pains for nothing.

Nanette, who ordinarily had not time to sit down, so greatly was she in request, sat out at least half a dozen country-dances.

No one in the assembly was aware of the Marchioness's real rank, yet it seemed as if the power of birth and of bluer blood did affect these worthy people, who involuntarily paid to Jill delicate attentions which they would never have thought of in the case of an equally lovely real shop-girl.

The Marchioness did not care to gain the admiration of these worthies, flattered though she was by the fact that she did excite it. It is said that queens, and very proud ones at that, have been more touched by the rough compliments paid them by a sailor than by the most elaborate madrigals of courtiers and poets.

There is something in a certain bluntness that is not displeasing to the most refined persons, and so it was that Mme. de Champrosé thoroughly enjoyed the compliments that were being paid to Jill. The shop-girl was proving to the Marchioness that the pretty things told her by the Chevalier, the Commander, and the Abbé were said in all sincerity.

Still, merely to turn the heads of middle-class people did not satisfy her. She wanted to fall in love herself, or at least to take a fancy to some one, and not simply to confine her escapade to the performing of rigadoons in a dance-garden.

The Marchioness's mind was turned once again to thoughts of simple and genuine happiness, such as nature bestows upon those who do not violate her laws, by the modest looks of the bride, in whom love was restrained by modesty, and who sought to contain her young husband's ardour,—his loud-sounding kisses, calling out the laughter of the company, making her blush to the eyes.

She recollected the hand deformed by gout into which, on leaving the convent, she had put her own; the gloomy, wrinkled, cold face of the Marquis de Champrosé, a sort of mummy dried up by ambition and debauchery, a face she had thought so ugly and ridiculous when she beheld it, bare of its wig, under the dais of her bridal bed. She could not help saying to herself that her maid's cousin had been luckier in her marriage than she herself.

It is true that the bridegroom had not sixty quarterings, but neither was he sixty years of age, which is a compensation.

While these thoughts were passing through the Marchioness's mind, and she kept fanning herself with her green paper fan with an ease that might have betrayed her to more experienced eyes, the druggist's son and the constable's clerk remained stuck before her, looking most piteous and ridiculous, for they were each meditating a declaration of love, the terms of which were all mixed up in their poor brains. Mme. de Champrosé enjoyed the fun quietly, and wickedly would not help them out of their difficulty, so that they rolled their eyes like those figures of negroes that have a clock in their stomach.

Justina, observing that her mistress was thus surrounded, came to her, took her arm, and walked about for a while chatting in a low voice.

"Has your ladyship been bored at my cousin's ball? What does your ladyship think of the guests?"

"I have not been bored; I have enjoyed myself as a woman does when dancing, and these people seem to be very pleasant."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Yet the druggist's son is well thought of in the Rue Sainte-Avoie, and the prettiest girls are glad to have him bow to them."

"I dare say, but he does not inspire me with the least desire to marry beneath my rank."

"What about the clerk?"

"He is well qualified for promotion in his office, but that is all."

"I am very sorry that your ladyship should have put yourself out for nothing."

"I have half a mind to have the coach called and to return home."

"If I might make so bold as to advise your ladyship, I should advise remaining a little longer."

"You are enjoying yourself, are you?"

"I do not enjoy myself when your ladyship is dull, but it may be that the one we are looking for will turn up just when we have gone. There are a number of young men still expected, and besides, it is with a ball as with fireworks, the last part is always the best."

The Marchioness yielded to these weighty reasons, and was not wrong in doing so, as shall presently be seen.

This is a queer world! Had the Marchioness gone a quarter of an hour sooner, she would never have fallen in love.

VII

JUSTINA'S prophecy was soon fulfilled and proved that she possessed much wisdom and was a perfect lady's maid, such as Marivaux would not have failed to introduce into one of his comedies under the name of Lisette; and the Marchioness had every reason to be glad that she had followed her maid's advice.

The ball had now lasted about half as long as lasts a proper ball, that is, until two in the morning, and refreshments consisting of sweet cider, Suresnes wine, and roasted chestnuts, were already being handed round, when there was a good deal of bustle and fuss at the door, and an individual, who appeared to be a man of importance, made his appearance in stately and triumphant fashion. It was the major-domo of the Prince de ——, who, like a good-natured swell that he was, condescended to lay aside his responsibilities and to come to enjoy himself for a time at the little entertainment.

The major-domo, who was about fifty years of age, had a rubicund face topped by a wig, which betokened

that he was a fervent worshipper of Bacchus, while his muscular calves, clothed in chiné stockings, and his square shoulders, set off by his ample maroon coat, testified to the fact that, in spite of his age, he was a hale old buck, and what in amorous tongue is called a redeemer of arrears.

This person, to whom the whole of the guests paid much deference, and who was addressed with much pomp as M. de Bonnard, had brought a young man with him, and introduced him under the modest cognomen of Mr. Jack, saying that he was a country relative of his who had come to Paris in hopes of obtaining, through his powerful patronage, a post as clerk in the Salt Office.

"Somewhat shy," added, by way of further explanation, which was received with all due respect, majestic M. de Bonnard, as he shook, with artistocratic ease and grace, after the manner of the great lords whom he sought to ape, a few grains of Spanish snuff from the folds of his ruffle, — "somewhat shy, but I trust these ladies will not treat him too much as a countryman, and will kindly help out a young fellow just landed here by the Auxerre coach, and who will be only too glad to learn fine Paris manners."

Having concluded this short address, M. de Bonnard pirouetted round on his heels with fair agility, and believing he had done all that was necessary for his protégé, left him to himself, letting the cock loose among the hens, and went off to talk lightly to the mothers, and to chuck the girls under the chin, with a half fatherly, half libertine air the secret of which is now lost.

Mr. Jack, whom Jill, by the way, was watching attentively from her corner, did not look nearly as awkward as might have been expected of a country youth; indeed, he had a good deal of ease of manner, especially considering the fact that he must have felt somewhat embarrassed at finding himself alone in a ball, knowing not a single soul, amid householders, druggists, constables' clerks, ladies' maids from great houses, dressed like princesses, and wealthy tradesmen's wives, gowned in flaming silks, and wearing bunches of pearls in their ears. He had a shapely figure for a countryman, and his dove-coloured drugget coat, with steel buttons, did not show to disadvantage though it had been cut in a small country town.

Jill noticed that the new-comer had a handsome leg and a small foot, and that he was neatly shod in well polished shoes with steel buckles.

As for his features, he had an engaging expression, which was improved rather than spoiled by a certain ingenuous air which women, even the least worldly, do not dislike seeing in young men. His glance, though gentle, did not lack for fire, and the vivacity of his looks showed that, but for his shyness, he could be witty indeed. This shyness, however, did not go the length of the stupidity which chokes a young fellow entering into society, makes him commit one blunder after another, and become highly ridiculous. Though he did come from the country, he did not appear to be a prey to those fits of idiocy that lead an unfortunate youth, who is burning with the desire to invite the pretty cousin he is in love with to dance with him, to ask, instead, the ugliest fright in the room.

He went with the most humbly polite air, but without any confusion, nevertheless, and invited straightway the prettiest, the most elegant, and the most run after girl in the room, that is, Miss Jill herself.

This masterstroke struck dumb two or three tow-headed duffers, lanky as hop-poles, with red hands, who, for an hour past, had been turning round and round Jill like unhappy herons, shifting occasionally from one leg to the other, and meditating the chimeri-

cal and fantastic project of inviting the lovely lace-maker to dance the next set.

The four fools uttered a deep sigh, and though they were born respectively in the Rue du Puits-qui-Parle, the Rue de la Femme-sans-Tête, the Rue de l'Homme-Armé, and the Rue du Petit-Musc, they could not help envying the ease with which the whipper-snapper just arrived from Auxerre was introducing himself to the pretty girls.

The amiable druggist, who rather believed he had made no unfavourable impression upon Jill, and who had been racking his brains since the beginning of the dance to evolve madrigals and compliments that should not savour too much of the Rue Sainte-Avoie, did not see this new rival enter the lists without a feeling of dissatisfaction. For people may say as much as they like that self-love blinds a man, it does not blind druggists to the extent of not making them dread the presence of a good-looking fellow by the side of the girl they love.

Nor did the constable's clerk fail to glare with glum look upon M. de Bonnard, and to curse him under his breath for having brought along the clean-looking, well dressed youth who, with a single sentence, succeeded

better than he after spending a couple of hours in pouring out compliments and paying attentions; for the smile with which Jill accepted M. Jack's invitation was so gracious, so sweet, and so kindly, that it made the scrivener jealous. He had never got anything more than slight smiles, granted as a favour, though his flow of fun would have made the dead themselves laugh, and this evening had been the evening of his life.

Mr. Jack took Miss Jill delicately by the tips of her fingers and led her to her place in the dance. He managed the figures very well, showed himself in no way awkward, and no one would have suspected that he had just arrived from the country if M. Bonnard had not said so.

"Have you never been in Paris before, M. Jack?" asked Jill of her partner in the interval of the country-dance.

"No, Miss; this is the first time I have come to this great city."

"And what is your impression of it? Does it come up to what you expected?"

"It does and it does not. I see in it superb buildings that testify to the power of our kings and to the wealth of private individuals, but at the same time so

much poverty, mud, and grime that I know not whether to admire or censure. The most striking thing I have seen in Paris so far is yourself, and I say it without flattery."

"If that is the case, you cannot have been long in town and you have not had time to see much."

"I have seen all I want to see, and I shall not push my researches farther. Although I do come from the country I know enough to value beauty, modesty, and grace."

"Now do stop, you dreadful flatterer. You will make me blush."

"And what lovelier colour could flush your cheeks than the blood of your heart moved by the truthful words of a man who loves you?"

"Let us say who is taken with me. Although I am modest I know of course that I am not quite the sort that inspires repugnance, but when it comes to telling me that you love me! — why, you have not known me for more than an hour!"

"An hour? why, that is more than necessary. I no sooner saw you than I felt in my heart that I was yours. Not know you? Great heavens! Have I not noted the celestial expression of your glance? Have I

not breathed in as I danced the scent of your nosegay perfumed by your bosom? Do I not know that you have fair hair, a willowy waist, and that you dance divinely? What more could I have learned about you, if I had followed you step by step for months, like your dog or your shadow? A life like yours, so clear, so pure, is read at a glance."

"Do you think so?" returned the supposed Jill, who could not repress a slight smile on hearing these last words. "I have blue eyes and fair hair, as you have truly observed, but how do you know that I am not shrewish, perfidious, ill-tempered, unbearable? Every girl is charming at a dance, and pleasure softens the surliest."

"Slander yourself as much as you please; goddesses may speak ill of themselves without blaspheming. But you will not change my opinion."

"Very well, let us agree that I am a combination of perfections; I shall not discuss the point with you, although there is a good deal of exaggeration in what you have just said. But it does not follow that I am bound to accept your love as soon as it is born."

"Nor have I asked you to do so. I mean, with your leave, to prove to you how lasting may be a feel-

ing that was born in a second and grew to maturity in an hour."

"I give you fair warning that if your fancy, born in the dance, does not end with it, and that if you do remember the little lace-worker whom you have thought pretty because you have seen her by the side of a number of plain girls, you will be obliged to court me in proper form, to be a devoted lover like the heroes of old time novels, and even then I do not guarantee that after you have undergone all those trials I shall not laugh in your face and drop you a fine curtsey, saying: 'Your servant, sir!'"

VIII

THE conversation was very seasonably interrupted by the beginning of another rigadoon, and Justina, who kept discreetly in the background and did not chaperon her mistress very strictly, readily understood, thanks to the thorough knowledge of the human heart in general and that of their mistresses in particular which marks ladies' maids worthy of the name, that Mme. de Champrosé was genuinely interested in Mr. Jack and was not far from seeing her wish fulfilled.

The ball was drawing to a close; the orchestra, tired of scraping, blowing, and thumping, was in vain trying to excite itself to renewed exertions by profiting by the breaks in the music to refresh itself; it was getting both sleepy and drunk; the oil was beginning to fail in the lamps, and the tapers, burned down low, threatened to crack their glass frills. Dawn, which had just quitted old Tithon's couch, was casting bluish pastel tones through the curtains.

Some sensible person proposed that before going

home and to bed, the whole company should repair to the Prés Saint-Gervais to see the sun rise, to drink milk at the dairyman's, and to pick lilacs. It was the beginning of May, when these flowers, so dear to the Parisians, who rightly admire their pretty violet thyrses, are in bloom.

The proposal was adopted with applause, and the whole company, including even the older people, who would have been much better in their beds than tramping through the dew-wet grass, started with joyous acclaim for the famous meadows, which constitute one of the greenest spots in the environs of Paris.

Jack offered his arm to Jill, and the latter accepted, with the understanding that Justina should accompany them and preserve appearances.

The druggist offered his to Denise, who, delighted at getting her prisoner back, did not think it wise to make any complaints. And the clerk was very glad to find that Nanette, the fair with the Rhinestone buckles, was willing to trot along with him; in this order the guests proceeded in couples down the little paths that divided the odorous clumps of trees.

Among these groups, mostly composed of engaged couples, a kiss had been snatched and returned here and

there in the winding walks, for kisses are never kept. Jack did not venture to take such a liberty, but he did press Mme. de Champrosé's arm close to his heart, and picked for her the largest bouquet of white and purple lilac that a grisette ever carried away from the Prés Saint-Gervais into her attic room. For her sake he pillaged the whole of Flora's basket.

In the pairs of lovers who purposely lost their way in the narrow paths, Lancret, the society painter, would have found an excellent subject for a picture. The brush of the artist accustomed to sacrifice to the Graces would have been attracted by the silk and pekin gowns, their bright colours showing against the background of verdure; the bodices, that, though not cut down after the nobly impudent manner of those of Court ladies, allowed nascent charms, already ripe for love, to be seen, or guessed at, rather; the arms lightly passed round waists; the heads put close together under pretext of whispering; the lips that imparted to the cheek the confidences meant for the ear, all combined to form a picture as pleasing to the eyes as to the heart.

Some distance behind came the company of relatives and older persons; the fathers in wide-skirted coats, of

a very unpretentious cut, with big shining buttons, leaning upon sticks with curved handles, and their hats set firmly on their heads; the mothers, stout and ruddy, still attractive, dressed in their wedding gowns, the tucks let out to the fullest extent, made of stuffs with staring patterns and large flowers, in the fashion of the beginning of the reign, listening to the free talk of their escorts, and watching the girls out of the corners of their eyes, though they could rely on their good behaviour. The groups they formed, and to which a painter would have imparted richer and warmer tones, admirably set off the bright clusters of blooming young people who were bathed in the rosy light of dawn, the youth of day.

But Lancret would assuredly have placed Jack and Jill in the centre of his composition. To guard against the damp, Jill had thrown the pigeon's-breast wrap over her shoulders; the silk garment, however, had slipped down, and when she bent her head she exposed her white, polished neck, on which gleamed a few stray hairs escaped from the steel comb that fastened her chignon. She kept close to Jack, in order to avoid the branches, covered with pearls of dew, that dripped upon her gown and seemed to bar her way so as to de-

tain her longer near them. At least that was the reason she alleged to herself, for it is certain that she was leaning markedly on Jack's arm, more so than was rendered necessary by her natural lightness and the absolute smoothness of the path.

By way of concealing her emotion she plunged her face into the great sheaf of flowers he had gathered for her, thus hiding her roses in the lilacs.

The dairyman's was reached, and he hastened to milk his cows, which were much surprised at the invasion of their stable by the light-hearted company, and turned round to look while the foaming milk poured into the spotlessly clean pans.

The dairyman not having a sufficient supply of cups, Jack and Jill, whom no one thought of separating, so well were they matched by nature, had but one between them. Jill drank first, and Jack managed to find on the edge of the cup the mark of the young lace-maker's lovely lips.

M. de Bonnard and the older people called for wine, preferring the juice of the grape to Arcadian milk, a refreshment better fitted for people who had not long been weaned.

At last the company dispersed.

When taking leave, Jack inquired whether he might have the pleasure of meeting Jill again, and the latter, after consulting with Justina for a moment, replied that in two days' time she would be taking some work back to a client, and that if Mr. Jack happened to be in the Rue Saint-Martin at three in the afternoon, he might walk with her a little way.

Then the hackney-coach which had brought them called for them, and the Marchioness, reaching her room by the private stair that, in the eighteenth century, was to be found in every house, even the most virtuous, enjoyed, under the blazoned dais of her bed, a sound sleep which was frequently traversed by the image of Mr. Jack.

IX

THE fair sleeper woke after noon, not an unusual hour in her case, for she never rang for her maid any earlier.

To every one of her people, save Justina, she appeared to have really spent the night in her mansion, and no one could possibly guess the lark she had indulged in. Besides, no one had a right to object to it, since she was a widow and responsible to no one for what she did. Then it is so easy to do as one pleases, while observing the strictest propriety, that it is only fools who voluntarily strip themselves of that varnish of good reputation which is always necessary and pleasant.

Justina's discretion was assured: the Marchioness was in possession of a secret that her maid would not have had divulged for the world; and besides, her trustworthiness was secured by a handsome income which was promised to Justina after a given number of years, if the Marchioness were satisfied with her fidelity. So Mme. de Champrosé ran no risk so far as the girl was concerned.

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Justina helped her mistress to rise and dress

The lined curtains and padded shutters which protected her temple of sleep from the intrusion of light and sound, were opened, and Phœbus, admitted to the Marchioness's rising, came to pay her his court, and to shimmer by her bedside.

Justina helped her mistress to rise and dress. The Marchioness was somewhat fatigued, or rather rendered languid by her performances at the dance, for Terpsichore, which makes men so stiff, has never yet managed to thoroughly tire out a woman, so perfectly adapted to dancing is the fair and nimble sex.

The bath was ready; Justina helped her mistress into it, and had some Peeping Tom been there, no doubt he would not have been crowned with antlers and devoured by dogs, as was Actæon's fate, but he would have beheld charms finer far than those of Dian's self; for it is not credible that a well formed goddess could have been so angry at being surprised when nude. It is certain that she could not stand being seen thus, and did not wish her charms to be examined in detail, since the result would have been unfavourable to her.

But this was not the case with the Marchioness, of whom it might be said that dress could not improve her, and indeed that it diminished her beauty.

When she had plunged her fair body in the perfumed and scented water, the mistress and the maid began talking, and it will readily be guessed that Mr. Jack was the subject.

"Did you notice," said the Marchioness to Justina, "how greatly that young man differed from the others who were there, and did it not seem to you that he had an air of very good breeding?"

"I quite agree with your ladyship," returned the complaisant Justina. "The young fellow unquestionably has an attractive mien."

"He is neither stiff nor awkward in his manners."

"Indeed he is not; his manners are excellent."

"He expresses himself agreeably, and though his language is simple it is well chosen."

"On that point, I accept your ladyship's judgment, for your ladyship is better able to judge than I am; besides, the young man spoke too low and too close to Miss Jill's ear for me to hear him."

"Do you think he is in love with me?"

"I scarcely think your ladyship needs any information from me on that score."

"He did say sweet things to me; he even went the length of saying that he is in love with me; but that

is not sufficient. I want to know whether his passion for me is deep and persistent, for that is what you say marks the love of the men of the middle classes."

"So far as I may trust to my slight knowledge of such matters, Mr. Jack appears to have the germ of a real love in his heart."

"No more than the germ?"

"A little virtue and resistance would turn it into a passion such as I described to your ladyship, and which is not to be met with in the great world."

"You strike me as being rather impertinent, Justina; to hear you talk, one would think that we duchesses and marchionesses are not as guarded as we ought to be in matters of love."

"A great lady has not to trouble herself about everything, and the rules of morality, which have been made for the use of the lower class of beings, are not meant to circumscribe people of quality in any way. I did mean that it is possibly in consequence of this that marquesses, viscounts, and chevaliers love with passing love only."

"So you would advise me to be virtuous if I desire to be loved by Mr. Jack?"

"I should not have ventured to say so plainly to

your ladyship, lest I should make myself ridiculous, but that is what I think."

"What an odd girl you are, Justina. Really your notions are extraordinary, but I shall put your idea in practice, if only for the sake of seeing how it will work out."

"Does your ladyship desire to leave her bath?"

"Yes; give me a wrapper and carry me to my bed. We shall continue our talk."

When the Marchioness had settled down among the pillows which Justina beat up lightly, the conversation between the mistress and maid was resumed in the following terms: —

"It may shock your ideas of propriety, Justina, but I have agreed to meet Mr. Jack; out in the open, it is true, so that there can be nothing wrong about it, but it is an appointment all the same."

"I shall not blame your ladyship for that. Since your ladyship desires to carry out this adventure, it would not do to lose the thread of it at the outset. If you had not granted Mr. Jack this meeting, I do not see how we could have come upon him again, as we do not know him, unless we ask M. Bonnard, who does."

"You are a sensible girl, Justina; but judicious as

my plan may be in its conception, it is rather embarrassing to carry out."

"If your ladyship will trust to me for the details and the trouble of the execution, I shall unfold my little plan of campaign. First of all, I shall need twenty-five louis."

"Take them. There is gold in the drawer of the little rose-wood desk by the window yonder."

"I have them."

"Now go on."

"With this money I shall rent a pretty and very modest and maidenly chamber, and furnish it with such furniture as a clever lace-maker, who never lacks for work, may be possessed of; for if later on you should desire to see Mr. Jack less mysteriously or more conveniently than you can in the street, it will be impossible for you, unless you are prepared to let the cat out of the bag, to receive him in Champrosé House, and your porter would be greatly surprised at having to announce so plain a name."

"Your reasoning is excellent, and the room appears to me to be indispensable."

"Since your ladyship approves, I shall secure it in the course of the day. Then we shall need a complete

outfit; frocks, house-dresses, jackets, caps; for your ladyship's wardrobe, well furnished as it is, cannot serve Miss Jill's purpose. Abundance is sometimes a nuisance."

"You are sententious as if you were a philosopher, but you are right, which is not always the case with philosophers. I grant the outfit, only let it be in good taste, for I do not wish to disguise myself to the point of not being pretty."

"Your ladyship may make her mind easy; I shall buy fine linen that will not annoy her, pink and white or blue and white prints, chintzes with little sprays of flowers, and other spring stuffs, fresh and not costly, such as are seasonable. Then, as your ladyship is fair and the hair will show more when not powdered, we shall need little simple and dainty caps, which, in view of Jill's trade, may be trimmed with lace."

"That will be delightful," cried the Marchioness, clapping her hands, and already carried away by the thought of the toilets; for the notion of wearing those dresses tickled her, as the simplicity of a meal consisting of brown bread, cream, and strawberries, in spring, on the grass in front of a farm-house, tickles a gourmet.

"Your ladyship would look well in anything, even in torchon, for your ladyship improves everything she wears. Besides, a pretty dress need not necessarily be costly, and I hope your ladyship will not be too much disappointed with her grisette costume."

"What I shall feel most is having to give up wearing silk stockings."

"There are thread and cotton stockings so fine that the difference is imperceptible, and silk stockings even might pass muster without appearing too much out of place, for some of the better-off of our shop-girls indulge in that form of luxury."

"That is reassuring. But how are we to manage to-morrow in order that I may keep my appointment? I cannot leave here at three o'clock dressed as grisette."

"Certainly not; but your ladyship has only to drive to some church or to a shop with two entrances, and have a hackney-coach in waiting. We can get into it, and go to Jill's room, where I shall dress your ladyship in such a way that your ladyship will believe she has always been engaged in making lace."

X

MATTERS having thus been settled, Justina helped her ladyship to rise, and having handed her over to the other women, who were to complete her toilet, she left her, after obtaining leave to go out.

The Abbé was introduced and admitted as usual to pay his court. In spite of the suffering his burning love must have caused him, his complexion was blooming, and he appeared to be in very good condition for a man who was roasted, calcined, and reduced to ashes. Ere long the Chevalier put in an appearance, followed by the Commander, who was just ahead of the financier, so that the Marchioness's private menagerie was complete.

They were all delighted to find her in better spirits, and were unanimous in attributing the improvement to the salutary influence of the drive in the Cours-la-Reine. But not one of these perspicacious individuals guessed that the bloom on Mme. de Champrosé's cheeks was due to her having spent the night at a

dance, and the sparkle of her glance to the fact that she loved not one of them.

Justina lost no time, indeed there was no time to lose, since everything had to be ready by the morrow.

She rented, in the neighbourhood of a church, a couple of very suitable rooms, at the rate of four hundred and fifty francs a year, paying a quarter's rent on the spot. Next she went to a second-hand furniture dealer, from whom she purchased all that was necessary in the way of furniture for Miss Jill's apartment, taking care to select only what was irreproachably clean, but at the same time did not look too new, and with the assistance of a couple of clever hands from the dealer's, she soon had the nest ready for the bird that was to occupy it.

The next day the programme settled upon was carried out in full. The Marchioness drove out in her own coach, dressed as became her rank, and went to the Church of Saint-R——, which she entered by one door and slipped out of by another. She was thus enabled to get into the hackney-coach, in which she found a wrap placed there by Justina so that she might throw it over her dress and ascend to her little room without attracting attention.

The stair was steep, like a mill-stair ; on the one side was a heavy balustrade, and on the other a rope to aid in climbing up. This was very different from the great stair in Champrosé House, which had been so commodiously designed by Ledoux, the favourite's architect, which was adorned with *bassi-relievi* representing bacchanals of children, by Lecomte, and up which ran a balustrade wrought and ornamented by Amour, the famous iron-worker. The contrast, however, pleased the Marchioness, who went stumbling up the rough stairs, used as she was to marble steps and soft carpets.

On entering the room she was delighted with Justina's zeal, for the little abode, though in no wise other than simple, contained all that was necessary to lodge innocence or love. Had Mme. de Champrosé been a philosopher, which she was not, she could have made many wearisome remarks about the folly of men who torment themselves in a thousand ways in order to attain a luxury which is not necessary to happiness.

Indeed, this interior, which Chardin the painter, rightly praised by Diderot, would have loved to paint, formed, with its gray wainscotting, its tiled floor covered with a worn carpet, its imitation-marble

mantelpiece surmounted by a painting in camaïeu, its sash with narrow panes, some of which had an air-bell in the centre, its Vincennes-ware pot in which stood a flower, and its sober, quiet, discreet light concentrated upon the work-table, as favourable a background for the Marchioness's beauty as her luxurious boudoir heaped up with lacquer cabinets, Chinese figures, Sèvres porcelain, panels by Boucher, water-colours by Baudoin, and innumerable costly superfluities.

The furniture was quite simple, but nothing had been forgotten by Justina.

A bedstead of plain wood, painted gray, picked out with white, was half concealed by chintz curtains; a few chairs, a sofa of green Utrecht velvet, somewhat faded and glossy, but without spots or tears, and on which one could have sworn grandmother had been sitting for ten years past; a marquetry commode with marble top and brass shell handles; a well polished little table, shining in a way that would have done honour to the cleanest of Flemish housekeepers, and on which were placed the boards, skeins of thread, packages of pins and bobbins used in lace-making; a panel fitted with a mirror, for the poorest girl must have a bit of mirror in which to look at herself, — all this furnishing

enabled the Marchioness, later on, to see that it is not necessary to spend much on lodgings for happiness.

The window, for the room had been occupied by a real grisette, was set in a frame of sweet peas, morning glories, and nasturtiums, some in bloom, some about to bloom, and, until they did so, twisting their heart-shaped leaves and their tendrils upon the strings a careful hand had stretched for them.

The window looked out upon the gardens of a large mansion in the neighbourhood; owing to this happy accident, Jill was not afflicted with the Paris landscape of roofs, chimney-pots, and high gloomy walls washed by the rain, which is not quite the sort to satisfy the eye.

The tops of the horse-chestnut trees, covered with blooms, were waving in the breeze, and their bitter perfume was wafted in on the tip of the zephyr's wing.

The examination of the rooms having been finished, the Marchioness proceeded to dress, and this was done in a twinkling, for it was only necessary to change the gown and the dressing of the hair, to pass from the composite to the simple. Thanks to Justina's skill, the metamorphosis was complete.

It is not so easy as it looks to transform a marchioness into a shop-girl; the opposite would probably be easier. Therefore Justina affirmed, later, that this disguise had been her master-stroke, her great work, and that not one of the richest toilets of the Marchioness had cost her so much trouble to compose or had seemed so difficult to carry out.

Mme. de Champrosé cast a glance at the mirror, having hitherto refrained from doing so in answer to Justina's request that she should not examine herself in detail, but only when she was fully dressed, so that she might enjoy the pleasure of the surprise.

The Marchioness was both delighted and amazed; she saw herself beautiful with a new beauty, and though she was more lovely than ever, she could scarcely recognise herself. She was altogether changed, even to the colour of her hair and her complexion; her air and her expression were quite different, owing to the lack of powder and rouge; instead of her piquant grace, her haughty mien, her insolent beauty, she had a sweet, modest, maidenly, almost childish expression, for the fresh simplicity made her look younger by two or three years. She was twice as beautiful as she had been at the dance, when, dressed in Justina's garments,

she had of necessity something less fine and distinctive; for garments are moulded by the character of their wearers, and acquire certain folds in accordance with their disposition; and Justina's disposition was that of a lady's maid.

"Your ladyship sees that she could afford to lose her fortune without her beauty being endangered, and that her charms are due neither to the dressmaker nor to the jeweller," said Justina with righteous pride. "The whole of your ladyship's costume is not worth more than ninety francs."

"Yes, but Justina has dressed me," replied Mme. de Champrosé, returning her maid's compliment. "Now it is past three o'clock; give me that box, and accompany me as far as the corner of the Rue Saint-Martin, where you may leave me to my fate."

XI

HER disguise being complete, the Marchioness descended the stairs, followed by her faithful maid, who supported her elbow with obsequious solicitude.

She found it strange to be walking about the streets by herself; it was the first time she had come into contact with the uneven, muddy, slippery pavement of Paris, which nevertheless has so many attractions for the observer and the moralist, both of whom collect there innumerable odd or philosophical anecdotes.

Hitherto she had seen the people in the streets from her coach only; now she saw them face to face, and was surprised to note among so many sad and wan faces marked by misfortune or poverty, quite a number which did not greatly differ from those of personages who enjoyed the privilege of admission to the great and the less circle at Versailles.

Unlike a regular grisette who trots along in sprightly fashion and makes her way through difficulties, the Marchioness walked in the most adorably awkward

manner; she hesitated at every step she took, and seemed to try each stone of the pavement, like a novice tight-rope dancer who tests the rope with her chalked sole. The carriages frightened her and caused her to utter little shrieks. Her heart beat tumultuously, as does that of every pretty woman engaged in an adventure, and while she was not exactly a Vestal, she was not so well used to such performances as not to be somewhat agitated. No doubt gossip-mongers might have remarked that the Marchioness was not yet twenty, and that she would doubtless get used to that sort of thing, like the Duchess de B——, the Baroness de C——, and Mme. de T——, the Chief Justice's wife.

As she walked, she realised the boldness of the step she had taken, a step that had appeared natural enough when in the form of a plan, so great is the difference between planning and carrying out.

It is always delightful to dream, but reality has coarse exigencies of its own, which are apt to wound a sensitive soul that would not be terrified in the same situation in thought.

The passers-by stared at her in an inquisitive and free-and-easy way that would have made her indignant, had not Justina reminded her that such glances, imper-

tinent if addressed to the Marchioness de Champrosé, ought not to offend Miss Jill on her way to carry back some work to a customer.

After she had traversed a few streets, the supposed Jill, entering better into the spirit of her part, tripped along the pavement without flecking her pretty gray silk stockings with mud, and stood fairly well the somewhat daring compliments fired off at her by the men she met.

Justina, bold and brazen faced as a soubrette in a play, formed the wing and the rear-guard, and put a stop to the advances of young libertines and lecherous old men, who are just the same as in the days when Susannah went bathing.

In this fashion the pair reached the Rue Saint-Martin, the place agreed on for the meeting. Here Justina had to leave Mme. de Champrosé, for it is not the custom for shop-girls to be attended by companions or maids when they go trotting about the city. She did not, however, go very far away, and remained to one side, on the watch, in order to be ready to hasten up in the event of her assistance being required.

After Justina left her the Marchioness summoned up all her courage, for she was as much alone in the

middle of the crowded street as if she had been in the centre of the African desert, and started close along the houses like a stray swallow.

She was not long alone. Mr. Jack, although the parish clock had not yet struck the hour of meeting, had long been waiting, for if punctuality be the politeness of kings, that of a lover demands he shall forestall the time. If he is not at the spot too soon, he is really too late.

Jack, in order to avoid attention, had been watching with great attention a dauber adorning with a coat of paint the sign of "The Fishing Cat," but he had none the less caught sight of Jill when she was yet afar off, and he hastened at a rapid, but measured pace, to meet the pretty lace-maker, to whom he bowed most respectfully when he found himself face to face with her.

Jill pretended to be startled when Jack spoke to her, just as though they had met by mere accident, and her cheeks flushed up in loveliest fashion, — Mme. de Champrosé, though a woman of the world, having a trick of blushing instantly when moved by feeling.

When Justina saw Jack walking by Jill's side, and the pair of them going up towards the boulevard ap-

parently on the best of terms, she came to the conclusion that she need not go on watching over her charge, and discreetly withdrew so as to leave her mistress free to act as she pleased.

The two of them made a very pretty pair; they looked like Cupid, disguised as a clerk, trying to win Psyche, disguised as a grisette. As they passed on the men said, "Is n't she pretty?" And the women, "How handsome he is! It is Cupid and Venus." And each one wished he might have such a mistress, and every one wished that she might have such a lover.

The Rue Saint-Martin, down which pass so many neat work-girls and so many good-looking youths in quest of love affairs, seemed amazed at the sight of so much loveliness and manly beauty.

And indeed it would have been difficult to imagine anything more lovely than Jill was. The arrival of Mr. Jack, even though she expected him, had spontaneously caused to bloom on her cheeks two bouquets of roses that Flora would have claimed for her basket; her blue eyes, veiled by long golden lashes, beamed softly as from behind a golden fan, and her bosom, responsive to the beating of her heart, rose and fell under the lawn of her bodice.

Jack, on the other hand, looked so high-bred in his clean yet simple dress that one might have suspected his mother's virtue, for it was hard to believe such an Adonis sprung from a country stock, and surely some man of quality, on his way through the place, must have led Mme. Jack astray. Such at least was the conclusion come to by the Marchioness, who was convinced that Jack belonged to the middle class.

My readers, however, will not be surprised at the young fellow's good looks, for they remember how bored was the Viscount de Candale at the Guimard supper, his coldness to Rosette when he drove her home, and the fancy that had occurred to him to go to the Moulin-Rouge to finish up the night in more genuine, if less high-toned enjoyment.

"I was afraid you were not coming," said he, opening the conversation with no great show of embarrassment.

The only reply vouchsafed him was a glance filled with sweet reproach, that plainly meant, "You knew very well that I was coming."

"My heart is beating hard, for I have been for more than an hour pretending to look at the shop signs."

"But I am not late," answered Jill, pointing with her slender finger to the dial of the church clock they were just then passing by.

"Love is always fast, and as far as it is concerned the best regulated clocks are slow when they have to strike the hour of a meeting."

"You are very complimentary, Mr. Jack."

"Not a bit complimentary, but very much in love. Fine gentlemen are complimentary, and know how to be impertinently amiable; but we people of lower condition are loving and sincere; we may not be witty, but we are genuine."

And as the Marchioness heard these words spoken with much fire, she agreed that Justina was right in saying that in matters of love a woman had to look beneath her rank in order to find a heart as yet untouched by passion and capable of genuine sentiment.

"Very well, I will allow that you are in love; but that is no reason why you should attract the attention of every one by your excited gestures."

"Pray forgive me, and allow me to offer you my arm. If I were merely to walk by your side, I might be taken for a stranger trying to force himself upon you and annoying you, while, if you do take my arm, you

are at once under my care, and though your beauty will still compel attention, my presence will at least force it to remain respectful."

The Marchioness, recognising the soundness of the reasoning, — though she would have thought it sound even if it had not been so, — rested the tips of her pretty fingers, covered with a thread mit, upon the carefully brushed sleeve of Mr. Jack's coat. With this assistance she trod with firmer step the slippery pavement, and they soon reached the boulevard.

"I think I had better be going home," said Jill, in the most artless and modest way, for she was not sorry to avail herself of this means of prolonging the interview and letting Jack know where she lived.

"Home be it; but where is your home?"

Jill gave him the name of the street. But as she had never gone out save in a coach, she was wholly unacquainted with the streets of Paris, and was utterly unable to find her way back.

Any one less deeply interested and in love than Jack could not have helped wondering how it was that a young lace-maker should not know her way home. The Marchioness explained the fact by saying that she went out but seldom, and then as a rule in company

with a friend who was a better hand at finding her way. She had not brought her that day for a reason that Mr. Jack might guess.

Naturally the young gentleman did not think the excuse a poor one, and was quite satisfied with it. For himself his assumed character of a country lad newly arrived in Paris justified his ignorance of the streets. There were but two things to be done: to ask the way at every street-crossing, or to hire a hackney-coach. Modest and shy though Jack was, it must be owned that the idea of a less public *tête-à-tête* in the wheeled boudoir called a hackney-coach impressed him most favourably.

He therefore suggested the latter alternative to Jill, who agreed to it, not without a blush; but she was beginning to feel tired, for she had never walked so long in all her life.

XII

IT was not difficult to get hold of a coach; one came along; the body was painted blue and it was lined with old yellow Utrecht velvet. In matters of love, a hackney-coach is often as good as Cythera's grove.

The two lovers got in, and in the course of the drive, unfortunately too short, Jack, with respectful boldness, managed to get hold of the Marchioness's hand, not very unwillingly on her part, and covered the rosy finger-tips with kisses.

The coach stopped, and Mme. de Champrosé heedlessly said, "Already!" — an exclamation that must have made Jack happy, for it was almost equivalent to a confession of love, or at least to the preface to such a confession.

Jack gave his hand to Miss Jill to assist her to alight, but did not let go her dainty fingers, which he kept pressing softly between his own. Strict propriety required that he should take his leave and withdraw, but Jack, though a country lad and most respectful in his

behaviour, was not the sort of man to let go Fortune's forelock once he had hold of it; so he followed Jill, to help her up the stairs, although she insisted that she could manage it by herself, for grisettes have no equerries to aid them.

With gentle but obstinate resolve, Jack, in spite of the curtsey Jill dropped him at her door, walked into the room with so candid, well-behaved, and reserved an air, that Mme. de Champrosé could not find it in her heart to reprove him.

"What will Justina say?" thought the Marchioness. "This is our second meeting only, and the enemy has already entered the place, while my heart is sounding a surrender."

Somewhat fatigued by her walk and more agitated than she cared to own, Mme. de Champrosé let herself fall into the ancient arm-chair, and fanned herself with her handkerchief, although it was not very warm.

Jack took a footstool and settled himself at her feet.

"Not so bad," thought the Marchioness, "for a young fellow from Auxerre."

And she was right, for the attitude adopted by Jack, a most respectful one to all appearance, and which may well be assumed in the presence of a queen, has the

advantage of lending itself as readily to liberties as to adoration. A great strategist in the art of love's warfare will invariably adopt it at once, and every Polybius in this line has recommended it. So it was a master stroke to start with.

"You have a nice room, Miss Jill," said Mr. Jack, glancing around.

"Yes," answered Jill carelessly; "there is room enough to work and sing."

"And to love."

"That I know nothing about. Aunt Ursula was very strict, and with her grim looks had a way of receiving suitors in most repellent fashion. Unfortunately my poor dear aunt died last year." And therewith Jill looked up at the ceiling, which, in rooms, represents heaven, with eyes that were as dry as dry could be.

"Heaven rest her soul!" exclaimed Jack, with due assumption of feeling, though he by no means regretted the passing away of the forbidding aunt, the dragon that watched over the apples of the Hesperides. "So you live here alone?"

"My cousin Justina, a very good girl, the one who took me to the dance, is my only visitor. I never

go out on week days save to take my work to my customers, and on Sunday to go to mass and vespers."

"Who would have expected to find virtue here?" said Jack to himself as he applied to the grisette the expression used of the mendicant by Molière.

"My father and mother died when I was quite a child, and I was brought up by my aunt. I have only Justina left now, and you are the first stranger that ever set foot in my little home. My cousin will scold me for having let you come in."

"And I thank you for the precious favour you have done me. When one sees a bird fly by, one desires to see its nest also. It will be very sweet for me to be able, as I think of you, to recall your face in its customary setting. In the daytime I shall think of you seated in this great arm-chair, by the window, while the sunbeams gild your hair, and you work with fingers that ought to hold a sceptre. At night I shall imagine your virgin head resting upon the chaste pillow of your blue and white bed, dreaming innocent dreams, and in the morning I shall know what flowers it is you breathe the scent of when, shaming dawn itself, you go to your window to open the sash."

"Oh! Mr. Jack, you speak just like the people who write songs. I wonder if you are an author and writing a play for the theatre," said Jill, in a tone of alarm.

"Be reassured, Miss Jill; I am not void enough of the feeling for poetry to indulge in the writing of verse."

"I am so glad, for if I ever did love any one, I should want him to keep all his talents for me."

"And you live happy here?"

"Yes, indeed; my work, which is neither disagreeable nor hard, and which I should keep on for the sake of the enjoyment, brings me in enough to live upon. It is true that my wants are not many."

"And do you not feel that you lack one thing?"

"No. Have I not good milk for breakfast and a kind neighbour to prepare my meal? In my business, you know, it is necessary not to soil one's fingers. Then I think my furniture is very pretty, especially since aunt Ursula left me her big padded arm-chair and her handsome chest of drawers with its brass handles. I tell you there are few girls of my class who are as well supplied with dresses and bravery as I am; I have a change for each season of the year: green for spring, pink for summer, lilac for autumn, and brown for

winter, besides my every-day frocks. And as for bonnets they are no trouble to me, for I make the lace to trim them with, and I treat myself as I would a good customer."

While thus enumerating her riches, Jill had risen and was displaying her dresses with childishly coquettish gestures that were admirably imitated, though they may have been natural. The dresses, while simple, had been made by the best dress-makers and rightly enough pleased the Marchioness, for they made her look pretty in Jack's eyes.

"You do not need these things to be beautiful," gallantly said the young Auxerre dandy after he had admired Jill's treasures.

"That is all very fine," returned she; "but you will never make a girl believe that a pretty cap spoils a pretty face, and that a new dress does not improve a jimp waist."

Mr. Jack, in danger of acting too much like the Viscount de Candale, was on the point of making a mythological and low-necked reply that would have been in place at Mlle. Guimard's or in the wings at the Opera, but which would have been highly improper in the chaste attic room of a well-behaved grisette. He

contented himself with acknowledging that dress improves beauty, an axiom which women have always considered sound, and which a hundred years later was taken for the subject of a comic opera by a famous writer of that class of works.

Having conceded thus much, he returned to his former line and said: —

"A padded arm-chair and a chest of drawers with brass handles cannot alone satisfy a girl's heart, especially when she is only sweet seventeen. Justina is no doubt a pleasant companion, but two women together are alone, each of them. Have you never wished to have a male friend?"

"Indeed I have, but aunt Ursula told me that men are deceivers ever, and that there could be no real friendship between a girl and a young fellow."

"No friendship, I grant you; but what of love?"

"Love is sinful."

"The most delightful sin possible, and the one most easily forgiven by Heaven," said Jack drawing Jill to him. She repelled him with so faint a "Don't!" that he paid no attention to it whatever, and printed a kiss upon the girl's rosy brow, which happened to be exactly opposite his lips.

Fortunately the sound of steps was heard on the stair, else Jill's virtue might have proved insufficient.

Jack, thinking he would find another opportunity, let go the dove he had hold of by the wing, and took his leave with the most civil air in the world, after having, however, obtained an appointment for the following Sunday.

Mme. de Champrosé, in order to cover her confusion, took up an odd volume that lay upon a shelf, "Huon of Bordeaux" or "The Four Sons of Aymon," I really forget which, stretched out her feet upon the footstool and waited for Justina, who did not turn up just then, for the sound of footsteps proved to have been a false alarm.

XIII

JUSTINA, once she saw her mistress was safe with Mr. Jack, had turned the opportunity to account to pay a visit to the shopman who, ruddy and stupid though he was, represented her ideal of true love, and whose heavy gallantry took her fancy more than the Chevalier's finicky graces. If he did not use very choice language, the shopman possessed at least the eloquence which proves persuasive with women, and in Miss Justina's opinion he was a perfect Cicero in a tête-à-tête.

So they had a pretty long talk together, and it was dusk ere she rejoined the Marchioness in Jill's room.

Her ladyship held a book in her hand, more by way of appearing to be occupied than of improving her mind, which was quite wide-awake as it was, for the romances a woman weaves for herself are far more interesting to her than those she reads, even if these be the work of the citizen of Geneva, of Arouet de Voltaire, or of Crébillon the younger.

Justina, who had thoughtfully devised an excuse, as she came along, in order to make her prolonged absence seem plausible and proper, discovered that she did not need to make use of it. The Marchioness had not observed that she had been so long coming; she did not even notice the sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks of her maid, nor her somewhat disordered, though partially tidied head-dress, which might have led her to suspect that Justina had not spent all her time on watch. Besides, the Marchioness, who was kind-hearted and easy-going, would not have minded, especially just then, when she stood in need of her.

"Ah! there you are, Justina," said she, disturbed in her meditation, and with a little exclamation that betokened surprise, rather than annoyance at being kept waiting.

"I am at your ladyship's orders," replied the maid, curtseying with a respectful and contrite air.

"Change my dress, Justina," said the Marchioness, putting herself into her maid's hands.

"That will not take long, for I have everything at hand."

In a twinkling the striped frock, the lawn kerchief, the gray silk stockings and the little shoes with buckles

had disappeared, and were replaced by the garments of a lady of quality who desires not to attract attention.

Thus dressed Mme. de Champrosé, accompanied by Justina, returned to her coach, which was waiting for her, and was driven back to her residence, where her absence, for which there was a perfectly good reason, had not been noticed.

On the way, Justina respected her mistress's silence. The Marchioness, whose heart was filled with as yet unknown emotions, was enjoying in its fulness the sweets of her new feelings. She was experiencing a new sensation of astonishment which caused her to be at once absent-minded and happy, and while she spoke not a word, her lovely face smiled back at her thoughts.

The financier and the Abbé, who supped with her that evening, thought she was more lovely than ever, though they could not account for it; and lovely with a beauty hitherto unknown to her, for, be it said with all due respect, a woman is like a thorough-bred horse; both are at their best when excited.

And there could be no question of Mme. de Champrosé having a soul that evening. She smiled most pleasantly upon the financier, and treated the Abbé far

better than she usually did. She laughed at their jokes, which furnished her with an opportunity to allow her inward joy to break out, just as if they had said the wittiest and most piquant things, though Bafogne, the financier, was about as clever as a wooden shoe and as graceful as an old sack, while the Abbé, though he did know Latin, and was well up in all the fashionable slang, gave no promise, if he persisted in remaining in the Church, that he would equal Bossuet, the Eagle of Meaux, or Fénelon, the Swan of Cambrai.

But, as certain philosophers, none the worse for their not being famous, have remarked, nothing exists but ourselves; it is our happiness or our sorrow that causes the landscape to appear beautiful or gloomy; and a person filled with joy will find cause for enjoyment where others, less happily disposed, will not find anything to interest them.

In Mme. de Champrosé's state of mind, she would have enjoyed the company of people far less entertaining than the Abbé and the financier. Nevertheless they wearied her at length, for the noise of their laughter, which became uproarious and troublesome, dispelled thoughts that were far too pleasant to be lost in the commonplaces of empty talk.

In order, therefore, to intimate to her guests, who were inclined to keep the ball rolling, that it was time for them to leave, she put on an expression well understood of men of the world, though very often the idea of leaving the lady of their thoughts alone with a rival induces them to disregard it.

The Marchioness's rosy mouth was contracted by a pretty, nervous yawn, politely repressed with the palm of the hand, but significant enough for any one who was not determined to pay no attention to it. But when the financier, who had risen and picked up his hat at the second yawn, observed that the Abbé did not appear to move, he sat down again with jealous resolution.

The Marchioness, seeing Bafogne settling down in his arm-chair like a man who intends to be comfortable for the rest of the night, and the Abbé in front of him like a china dog, felt that she must strike a decisive blow, and in a plainly wearied and bored tone, asked what time it was.

The Abbé, much more a man of the world than the financier, understood that to make a longer stay would be in bad taste, and cleverly catching hold of Bafogne's arm, said to him airily : —

"Are you never coming, my dear fellow? Can you not see that our dear Marchioness needs rest?"

Vexed though Bafogne was, he could not help swinging round and following the Abbé's curved back as the latter bowed low to the Marchioness.

The two gentlemen having gone, Mme. de Champrosé, who but a moment before had seemed overwhelmed by Morpheus' most potent soporifics, compounded of expositions, tragedies, and academic discourses, suddenly became more wakeful than a cat watching a bird. She rose from the easy-chair in which she was lying nonchalantly with the languid grace of a tired-out woman, walked up and down the room two or three times, then, going to the mantelpiece, pulled the watered-silk bell-rope.

On hearing the silvery tinkle of the bell Justina at once made her appearance; feeling that the hour for confidential conversation had arrived, she had been waiting in the antechamber ready to enter at the first signal. Justina was far too expert a lady's maid not to be aware how useful it is to one of her class to be consulted on her mistress's love affairs.

When she had disrobed Mme. de Champrosé, who put on a great wrapper of Indian muslin trimmed with

Malines lace three fingers wide, and donned the most coquettish of little lace caps, the butterfly wings of which were fetchingly effective, Justina pretended to withdraw as she put to her mistress the regulation question:

"Does your ladyship need anything else?"

"Stay, Justina; I do not feel like sleeping just now," said the Marchioness, raising herself on her sweet, rosy elbow buried in the cambric pillow.

"Does your ladyship want to say anything to me?"

"You are a pretty one with your air of surprise. Of course I have something to tell you."

"I am all ears," returned the maid, crossing her bare arms covered with long mittens.

"I shall have to begin myself, for I see you insist on keeping your mouth shut. What do you think of Mr. Jack?"

"He is very nice."

"He has beautiful teeth."

"Very beautiful."

"A fine figure."

"Very fine."

"Tell me, Justina, is this to be a conversation with an echo?"

"I am simply of your ladyship's opinion concerning Mr. Jack, who appears to me to be an accomplished young gentleman. He has good manners, dresses well, and dances beautifully. As for his intellectual qualities, I can say nothing about them, for he confined his remarks to Miss Jill, but cleverness is not a requisite in love."

"He is very clever, I assure you, and exceedingly witty."

"So much the worse."

"Why so much the worse? Cleverness does not spoil a man."

"I thought your ladyship was looking for an artless lover."

"Yes, but a man need not necessarily be a fool in order to love."

"Yet the proverb says, 'to love like a fool.' And proverbs are the wisdom of nations."

"What have these unfortunate wits done to you, Justina, that you should be constantly running them down?"

"They have not done anything to me, your ladyship."

"And is that why you prefer fools?"

"It is a reason for it, is it not?"

"You need not worry, for Mr. Jack is not that sort of wit."

"I will not conceal from your ladyship that I took him at first for a poet, on account of a certain melancholy way he has."

"Nonsense! His finger-nails are too clean, his hair too well brushed, his stockings too well drawn up for him to be a poet; besides which, I have not observed any farrago in his conversation."

"Since your ladyship is sure that he is not a scribbler, I consider him charming in every way."

"Do you think he loves me in the way I want to be loved?"

"So far as I can judge, he is very much taken with your ladyship — with Miss Jill, I mean."

"Well, I do not suppose he would be bold enough to aspire to the Marchioness de Champrosé."

"I am not so sure of that; his eyes have a way of flashing, and he looks as if he had a fair dose of pride."

"But he must not find out that Jill is a marchioness."

"Nothing will be easier than to prevent his doing so, for assuredly he cannot frequent the houses where

your ladyship visits, or have the right to drive in the royal carriages."

"Even if he were to meet me, he would not know me again. You have succeeded so well in making me into two different persons that when I am wearing Jill's jacket, I am really at a loss to know who I am."

"When is your ladyship to meet this handsome young gallant again?"

"On Sunday, when I am supposed to have no task to finish, or work to take to customers."

"If I might venture on giving your ladyship a piece of advice, I should recommend your ladyship being rather stand-off with Mr. Jack when he begins to talk soft nonsense, and to rap him over the fingers if he attempts to take any liberties. This being the way in our class, your ladyship will be keeping more to the spirit of the part."

"I shall. I shall say to him, 'Stop, sir!' in a . . . comic opera tone."

"I mention that, your ladyship, because Mr. Jack might well suspect Miss Jill of being a marchioness, if, with the narrow notions of virtue which rule in her little world, she were to let herself indulge at once in the facile ways of a great lady."

"Do you know that your remarks are very insolent?"

"Oh! your ladyship has no idea how much importance is attached to such matters among the middle classes. No one expects a girl to own her love before six weeks or three months of courting at the least. Besides, if your ladyship were to compel Mr. Jack to urge his suit, as our women do, I will answer for it that your ladyship would have experiences which she cannot even guess at now."

"How very metaphysical you are this evening, Justina."

"Have you ever been hungry, my lady?"

"What an odd question! Never, of course. Nobody ever is hungry."

"Peasants and artisans tell a different story."

"Nothing ever tempts me at table; I may try a bit of blancmange, nibble the wing of a partridge, trifle with sweets, and sip a little Barbadoes cream, but that is all."

"Well, if your ladyship were to starve yourself for a day or two, you would eat a crust of brown bread ravenously, and think it delicious, even if it were full of straws and sawdust."

"I understand. You advise me to diet myself so that I may acquire an appetite."

"Exactly."

"There may be sense in what you say."

"If you will only hold out for a fortnight, my lady, I predict that your ladyship will be as much in love as ever a seamstress has been."

"But what will Mr. Jack say to such treatment?"

"He will become so madly in love with your ladyship that he will stop at nothing."

"You are talking the sheerest nonsense, though there does seem to be something in it. I am glad you have strengthened my resolution, however, for to-day I very nearly proved untrue to my dress, and came near forgetting that Jill was not the Marchioness de Champrosé. It was high time, for the sake of my character, that you should return, else my novel would almost surely have begun with the last chapter. Henceforth, in order to conform to your recommendations, I shall display Hyrcanian modesty."

XIV

WHILE thus chatting Mme. de Champrosé had Justina assist her into bed, and the maid withdrew when, ere long, she saw Morpheus was casting his golden dust into the eyes of her beautiful mistress.

The Marchioness de Champrosé was not the only woman whose thoughts were full of Mr. Jack. Since the supper at Mlle. Guimard's, Rosette also had been thinking constantly and tenderly of the Viscount de Candale.

Rosette, the dancer, in spite of her Manon Lescaut life, — and it ought to be said in her favour that it was scarcely possible for a woman to lead any other in those days if she was engaged at the Opera, — was a tender-hearted girl, and was just then experiencing emotions rather unusual in a dancer who had but recently emerged from the corps of supernumeraries. She was in love.

She had been captivated by the Viscount's gracious sadness and his air of weariness, which, in spite of his

wit, made one feel that there was a soul behind it all, though soulfulness was not a matter that greatly interested the eighteenth century. In those days the way to please was to have a pretty mouth, the nose up in the air, the cheek rouged, whether artificially or naturally, a handsome leg, a sword by the side, a hat under the arm, a hand in the shirt-ruffle with the air of a Marquis de Moncade, to offer sweets out of one's bonbon box, to chatter trifles or lascivious suggestions, to be able to sing the latest stanzas directed against the favourite, to be gay, neat, lively, superficial, and especially jocose; for it was the time of laughter, sport, and pleasure, that were expected to rule life as they ruled over the tops of doors. Melancholy, the delicate blossom of the soul, was considered a disease, which, in view of its etymology, concerned M. Purgon and M. Fleurant.

Rosette, therefore, must have possessed a nobler and more tender disposition, else she would not have fallen in love with him at a time when her companions, and even women of a higher station in life, considered that he was gloomy and ran the risk of being a bore for lack of sharpness and impertinence.

When he was brilliant as fireworks, with his dress glittering with ornaments and his wit with bright say-

ings, and when, in the first rapture of his conquests, he had not perceived the emptiness of pleasure, Rosette had not felt impressed by his qualities as she had done since; a fact that would tend to prove the awful paradox that under the reign of Cotillon III, at the Opera, there was a dancer, incredible as it may seem, who actually had a heart. Incredible, because that sort of creature cares only for gold, bonds, diamonds, silver plate, carriages, six-foot-tall footmen, and other substantial things, and enjoys only the most unbearable jokes told in the slang of the stage or of the orgy.

Poor Rosette had been thunderstruck when Candale, after driving her home in his carriage, had so virtuously bowed farewell to her at her room door, for, without being conceited, she did think she was attractive enough not to merit so much respect, apart from the fact that in the whole course of Louis XVth's reign, such a thing had probably never before happened.

Rosette did not breathe a word about it, for she knew that if the story got wind Candale's reputation would be gone. But the next morning, much troubled by her misadventure, she carefully examined herself in the mirror; she undid her hair, which was very abundant; she looked at her teeth, turning back her lips so

as to uncover her rosy gums, and never did a young wolf, busy slaughtering its first sheep in a wood, exhibit a cleaner set; she examined her complexion, which was smoother than satin, than marble, or whatever else is smoothest in this world, and failed to find a single wrinkle, cut, or crack, a single freckle or spot; neither Hebe, the goddess of youth, nor Hygeia, the goddess of health, are endowed with lovelier bloom than was Rosette.

By a fortunate circumstance, that attends vice oftener than virtue, Rosette's cheeks preserved, in spite of powder and rouge, the peach bloom that disappears at the first touch; she looked over her arms, the most beautiful in the world, her legs admired of all Paris when, in Dauberval's ballets, they gleamed like marble under her silk tights. The net result of the examination was a smile of satisfaction: Rosette found herself beautiful.

Reassured, she accounted to herself for Candale's behaviour by supposing that he had been worried that evening or else that he was tired, though in the eighteenth century people were not supposed to get tired. She therefore made up her mind to write to the Viscount de Candale, — a remarkable thing for a

dancer, who was cleverer with her toes than with her fingers.

The ballet-dancers, and even the great ladies of the eighteenth century did not shine particularly in the matter of caligraphy and orthography. We have delightful letters from the pen of Mme. de Pompadour and Mme. de la Popelinière, charming in style, but spelled in a way of which a modern cook, even, would be ashamed.

Now Rosette was neither better nor worse in this respect than the other beauties of her day. She took a large sheet of paper, and wrote on it, in letters an inch long and of most hieroglyphic appearance the following note, which would have been more legible had it been written with her big toe dipped in ink: —

Dear Viscount, — I am very anxious about you, for I am sure you were unwell the other evening, or else a prey to remorse, when you withdrew so abruptly and so ill-humouredly. I suspect that you concealed some serious offence from me when you were kneeling at my feet in big bony Guimard's house. Come and complete your confession, and do not be afraid, for the penance shall be a pleasant one. I am at home to you all night and all day, except between twelve noon and two in the afternoon, at which time I have to rehearse a new

step with gargouillades that will take your fancy, and that suit me better than rigadoons, tabors, and loures.

Your own,

ROSETTE,

Second leading dancer at the Opera.

P. S. — Don't you think Guimard is a great deal too thin, and looks like a spider when she is dancing?

This missive was carried to Candale House and handed to the Viscount on a handsome silver salver chased by Reveil.

Candale was not surprised by the strange caligraphy and audacious spelling of the love-letter, which he deciphered easily enough, and said, with the adorably conceited air of the noblemen of that day, to the tall flunkey who was waiting for the reply, an air half of boredom, half of patronage: —

"Say I will call."

XV

WHEN Mme. de Champrosé woke, her first thought was of Jack. She had done nothing but dream of him. The whole night, while sleeping under the dais of her bedstead, the noble Marchioness had seen herself in the little chamber Justina had hired, dressed in Jill's costume, seated in the arm-chair that looked as if it had indeed belonged to a maiden aunt, holding in her lap the narrow board used by lace-workers, and intertwining with her slender fingers the delicate threads that became tangled as Jack kissed the hands, while he was devoutly kneeling on a footstool before her.

Mme. de Champrosé seemed to have changed her heart and character as she changed her sphere. The constant attentions of the gallants who overwhelmed her with sickly compliments and wearisome madrigals had hitherto produced upon her the same effect as whipped cream and iced meringues, which destroy the taste for healthy food and sate the appetite without nourishing one.

Too constantly surrounded by people eager to satisfy her whims, and to anticipate her least desires, she had spent her life in absurd nonchalance. The semblance of love had driven away love itself, but since she had met Jack, love had expelled its imitators.

The moment she was dressed, the desire to return to the little room came strongly upon her, but Justina, prudent in spite of her apparent thoughtlessness, made her mistress understand that it would not always be easy to leave the mansion incognito, and that stratagems which succeed once or twice, because they are unsuspected, end by being found out.

"Your ladyship would do better to give out that you are going to spend six weeks in some country seat or other."

"It would be easy enough to do so, but if I were to announce that I am going to one of my estates, I should be expected there; my Paris friends might take it into their heads to come to visit me, and then everything would be found out."

"But, my lady, it is not to one of your ladyship's residences that I advise you to go."

"The matter would become known all the quicker if I were to visit any one of my friends."

"I think I have heard your ladyship mention that you had a relative in Brittany."

"Quite true; I had forgotten. I have an aunt, old as the hills, who roosts like an owl in her ancient tower, in the company of a lot of other owls, and who has so unpronounceable a name that it makes my mouth sore to try to say it. I am told that in order to reach this abode of hers, which overhangs the ocean at a height of two or three hundred feet, one has to travel over a regular break-neck road."

"Then your ladyship had better pay a visit of a month or two to your ladyship's aged aunt."

"Nonsense, Justina."

"Your ladyship's aunt never comes to Paris or Versailles, does she?"

"No indeed; she fancies herself still living in the days of Anne of Brittany and the Provincial Estates, and she looks upon Paris as being the Scarlet Woman."

"She is just what we want, then. Your ladyship will get into a post-chaise, accompanied by her faithful Justina, and allege that she takes no servants with her out of deference to the cranky and uncertain temper of the old lady; thus your ladyship will leave openly, with much jingling of bells and cracking of whips, and

at the very first relay we can don our pastoral dresses and re-enter Paris by another gate."

"Capital!" exclaimed the Marchioness, clapping her hands joyously. "In that way I can be free for six weeks. Justina, you are a treasure."

"I am willing to agree since your ladyship says I am," answered Justina, with a mock curtsey. "I know what I can do, and M. de Marivaux has introduced into the plays he writes for the Théâtre-Français, maids that are not a patch upon me."

The Marchioness nodded assent.

Everything was done exactly as Justina had planned. The news of the intended visit having been duly announced, the post-chaise drove out of the court-yard of Champrosé House, drawn by three powerful Percheron horses, amid a hurricane of cracks of the whip that made the sylphs lashed in the air utter piteous shrieks.

The chaise rapidly traversed the dirty streets of the great city, splashing mud over the pedestrians, running down dogs, and bowling over philosophers who, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, tried to get knocked over by coaches, in order to indulge, in their printed papers, in violent attacks against the rich, — attacks intended to

catch the rabble, which always enjoys that sort of invective.

The gates were left behind and the open country entered upon. Although it had been raining during the morning and the roads were heavy and wet, the sky was beautifully clear, and a few dappled clouds, light as those painted on ceilings by Fragonard, were floating on a tender blue background of as delicate a hue as that of the most perfect Sèvres china. The foliage, of a bright and soft green, — for spring was just coming in, and Flora had not yet seen her flowers, changed into fruits, going to fill Pomona's baskets, — embellished the view, and made it appear as charming as an operatic pastoral scene painted by Boucher. The distance, though the landscape was not quite so blue and green, was nevertheless charming, for Nature, while lacking in grace and apt to be somewhat coarse, is not unskilful in the use of the palette and the brush, and if it had only been trained in a proper school, it would be irreproachable.

It must be owned that the people who inhabited the country did not wear pigeon's-breast taffeta and céladon green satin, like those one sees in panels above doors and in pastorals, nor did the sheep that followed

them deserve to be called white, as Mme. Deshoulières does so lavishly. They did not appear to have been washed for a very long time, indeed never to have been washed at all; the dear little lambkins had no pink or blue ribbons round their necks, and if the lovely Phyllis had tried to clasp one of them to her breast she would infallibly have soiled her be-ribboned bodice, for the little brutes were abominably filthy.

The Marchioness was rather taken aback at the sight of these sheep, for the society verses of the Abbé and the water-colours on her fan had given her a very different idea of the ovine race.

"What is that bundle of rags going along on those two big, ugly, flat red feet?"

"That is a shepherd, your ladyship."

"Nonsense, Justina. It cannot be. A shepherd? It is impossible."

"I must say he is not very much like those you see at the Opera."

"It is a great mistake on his part, Justina. Reality should copy the imitation."

"There is no gainsaying the fact that when Marcel and Vestris dance a coranto in a pastoral ballet they look a great deal better than that."

"And what is that other horror, beating the turkeys with a switch?"

"Your ladyship has just seen Tircis; this is Phyllis."

"Justina, you are taking advantage of my being unacquainted with the country to tell me dreadful fibs. You will never make me believe that that hideous piece of shapeless humanity, with tousled hair, freckled face, patched skirts, and horrid, ragged cape is Phyllis."

"It is Phyllis herself and none else. There are thousands of Phyllises in France just as ugly as she is."

"Well, you have terribly upset my notions of the country."

As she talked, Mme. de Champrosé kept looking to the right and to the left, full of wonder at all she saw, and delighted at the thought that while she appeared to be going away from Jack, she was in reality drawing nearer to him every minute.

When the post-chaise stopped at the relay, Mme. de Champrosé pretended to feel fatigued and asked for a room with a languid air, as if she were suffering from an unforeseen indisposition and wished she had not set out.

The horses were taken out, and Mme. de Champrosé said she would see in a couple of hours whether she

would be able to go on. Of course her illness grew worse, and Justina, with the authoritative tone of a person versed in matters medical, declared they would have to go back; they therefore started, not in the post-chaise, but in a vehicle the girl had already hired.

The Percheron horse harnessed to this concern brought the Marchioness and her maid at a good pace to the Saint-Denis gate. There the trunks were transferred to a hackney-coach, and ere long the two women had reached the little lodging, the road to which Jack, though he had been there at night only and had not written down the address, easily managed to find.

XVI

THERE are to be met with, in some Hindoo tales, beings, gods, genii, or merely magicians, that possess the power of assuming different bodies and lives while retaining their own souls. The Marchioness, thanks to Justina's industry in carrying out her mistress's whim, found herself, without making use of any talisman, or magic words, as happily situated as these personages. Her transformation, or metamorphosis, if you prefer it, was complete, and there was nothing in her new abode that recalled to Jill the remembrance of the Marchioness de Champrosé. It was a wholly different life.

It often happens that one changes one's life in the most careful manner, yet carries away something of one's self into the new situation, even if it be but garments or a name. In this case, however, everything was different, and Mme. de Champrosé wondered whether she was a marchioness or a grisette.

It will readily be understood that Jack did not fail to keep the appointment made for the Sunday.

As it was a fête day, M. Bonnard's young protégé, who came early, very nearly caught the supposed Jill in bed, owing to her habit of late rising; and he suggested, after the habit of clerks and grisettes, that they should go off into the country in the environs of Paris, to eat strawberries, ride on donkey-back in the woods, and dine at the "White Rabbit" tavern.

The proposal was accepted, Jill merely stipulating that Justina should come also. The latter, however, who preferred her shopman's company to any other, however delightful, — for if he was not eloquent, he was certainly very fetching when alone with her, — excused herself on the ground that she had important calls to make that could not be put off. Jack was very grateful to her for eclipsing herself thus, nor was Mme. de Champrosé at all sorry.

The pair drove to the gates in a hackney-coach. Although Mr. Jack was merely a supernumerary in the Salt-Tax Office, he appeared to have brought from Auxerre an ample supply of six-franc crowns in his leather purse, and consequently was able to indulge in extravagances that would have terrified and ruined junior clerks, and even druggists' sons.

The environs of Paris, without being as beautiful as

those of some other cities are claimed by travellers to be, yet present a happy mingling of cultivated ground, gardens, marshes, and wooded spots where birds and lovers can nestle. The rustic roofs, the market-gardeners' houses, the wind-mills with their flapping sails, the wine-gardens full of laughter and song, enliven the landscape, which, if not actually rural or picturesque, is not without many a lovely spot, and many an unexpected charm. Besides, the cool groves of Tempe are not indispensable as a setting for the loves of a Parisian grisette and a clerk.

So Jack and Jill went wandering along the hedges, in which the young girl kept seeing flowers she wanted to pick, and by the cornfields the crops in which were yet too young to lend their sheaves and curtains to love.

Talking and sauntering they reached the wood, where, to her great amusement, Jill was perched on a donkey, and rode down several of the walks, accompanied by Jack and the driver, who joined in whipping up the little moke. The long-eared animal did not mind them in the least, and cropped, as it went, a thistle or a green bough, whence flew butterflies as eager to court the prickly flower as the rose of which they are said to be so fond.

It would be difficult to put down in writing the conversation of the pair. Words that have no importance in themselves assume infinite value when to them is added the flashing of the glance, the trembling of the voice, the flushing of the cheeks. Jack and Jill were already so much in love with each other that they could not speak their love, and they simply enjoyed, without having to talk about it, the happiness of being together in the fields, amid flowers and verdure, on a fine spring day.

The fact that love is one of the primitive passions accounts, perhaps, for its being felt more strongly amid natural surroundings. Human and social conventionalities are more easily forgotten when there is nothing fictitious to recall them, and many a woman who would be inaccessible in town becomes more human in the fields.

That is why the poets, who occasionally conceal philosophical reflections in the images they use, have peopled the hills, the dales, the woods, the meads, and the fountains with oreads, dryads, napææ, limoniades, naiads, pans, ægipans, satyrs, and fauns, all very lover-like and amorous, while they have never thought of doing the same for the towns.

Mme. de Champrosé nevertheless did not yield to the charm, and if she did hear the advice offered her by the birds billing in their nests, of the flowers that bent towards each other as they opened their calyxes, she would not heed them. Was this due to high principles, or to the remembrance of the advice given by Justina? Or was it that Jack, made more timid by his love, did not know how to profit by the protecting shades of the groves, and the conveniences of the bracken? Neither.

The fact was that the condition in which the two young people found themselves was so delicious that they feared to change it by doing anything that might have increased their bliss, but that might also have spoiled it. And thus it came about that a marchioness and a viscount, disguised the one as a grisette, the other as a clerk, ate strawberries under the greenwood tree, without violating the proprieties by indulging in aught more than a few pressures of the hand, and a few kisses on the hair or on the forehead, acts which would not have scandalised the most prudish of shepherdesses.

And if any of my readers should wonder that Jack, who seemed more resolute and bold in the beginning,

now proved so unenterprising, I shall reply that at first his fancy only had been captivated, but now his heart was enslaved. As for my fair readers, I am sure they will appreciate this delicate difference in feeling.

Lovers claim to live on air, after the manner of the sylphs, of whom M. de Crébillon the younger and the Count de Gabalis tell most amazing things; but such a claim appears to me to be very untenable. It is certain that Jack and Jill, notwithstanding all the pleasure they had taken in gathering violets, picking strawberries, and exchanging kisses in the woods, felt quite satisfied when they reached the "White Rabbit" tavern.

The "White Rabbit" tavern looked very well where it stood on the roadside. Its sign, known as far as the oldest inhabitant can remember, had been painted by a very distant descendant of Apelles, on either side a sheet of iron that creaked in the breeze and was shaded by a long pine bough. The tavern-keeper, however, somewhat distrustful of the artist's talent, and mistrusting the fidelity of the portraiture, had thought it wise to place in a cage a living sign which the most unlearned could not possibly mistake. A huge white rabbit, with very long ears, and big red

eyes, was munching a carrot side by side with its own fallacious image, which might have been taken for a horse, a deer, or an elephant.

The front of the tavern was painted, like the face of a toper, with a jolly red coat of paint that indicated to the worshippers of the goodly bottle that here was a temple, or a chapel at least, to Bacchus.

On the old moss-covered tile roof on which bloomed house-leeks, were walking a number of pigeons, unhappy birds of Venus, that did not anticipate being broiled and smothered in French peas, and were busy making love just as if no spit were being incessantly turned on the ground-floor.

In the yard the chickens were displaying the same thoughtlessness, although now and then an under-cook in white jacket, white cotton cap, and knife by his side, would issue forth from the lower room and catch hold of one of them by the wing in spite of its shrieks; for the tavern was much frequented, and the bluish spiral of smoke issuing from the chimney against the background of verdure, never ceased to ascend.

Round the house stretched trellised arbours forming small private rooms, covered with hops, Virginia creeper, climbing roses, and honeysuckles; rustic and sentimental

in the highest degree. The scent of the flowers happily corrected the more substantial but less sweet odours of the cooking, and the petals of the roses dropped into the glasses as though to unite Venus and Bacchus.

The two lovers settled down under one of the arbours, at a table covered with a coarse and yellowish, but spotlessly clean cloth, with a broad rose-stripe down the centre, on which were laid pewter forks and spoons, ribbed glasses and a pitcher of Argenteuil wine, rather new, but genuine and unbaptised, a rare thing in a tavern, the keepers of which are great hands at converting wines and will not suffer any save such as are good Christians to enter their cellars.

The meal was most lively; the dishes, though simple, were well cooked, and they had the best of sauces, appetite.

Had any one passing along the road looked through the foliage at the clerk and the grisette eating and laughing with equal heartiness, it would never have occurred to him that the clerk was a viscount and the grisette a marchioness, that Jack was M. de Candale, and Jill Mme. de Champrosé.

They returned to town in the loveliest moonlight, and Jill, who had thoroughly entered into the spirit of

her part, gracefully bade farewell to Jack on the threshold of her house and neatly shut the door in his face.

Thus did the day, begun under the auspices of Venus, goddess of love, end under those of Minerva, goddess of wisdom.

XVII

IN vain did poor Rosette wait for the Viscount de Candale; engaged as he was elsewhere at playing at Mr. Jack, he could not well be with her.

She was surprised at such lack of politeness in so well-bred a gentleman, and it put her into so bad a temper that she treated very harshly an officer of the Musketeers, an abbé, and even a farmer-general of taxes, who attempted to take liberties with her as she was dressing, although these latter personages are reputed to be in great favour at the Opera and to meet with no resistance on the part of the ladies.

That evening she danced wretchedly, lost the time, mixed up the intervals, and was very nearly hissed, for she kept looking for the Viscount, and, not seeing him in his usual box, tried to discover him in the lowest or the uppermost boxes, where she suspected him of being with some rival of hers. She was unable to find him, and returned into the wings without bestowing even a thought upon the lively performance she had just gone through; most imperfectly, it must be owned, but that,

if she had done it well, would have won her such a storm of applause as would have made her dear friend Guimard swear.

The supper, which she was wont to give after the performance, proved dreadfully dull and gloomy, in spite of the efforts made by the guests and parasites, who never fail to be present at such entertainments. It was probably the first time that any one had felt bored in Rosette's rooms.

The next day, seeing that Candale still remained absent, she resolved upon a decisive step. She determined to go to see him, no matter if her feminine self-love was hurt. But true love, which is stronger than death, easily bears down vanity.

She dressed with infinite taste, grace, and luxury, for she meant to be irresistible. It seemed as though the fairies had worked with their delicate fingers at the marvels of her head-dress, and made her gown out of the petals of flowers, so tenuous and light was it, with its wealth of ornament.

Her Dubarry chignon, a charming invention due to the favourite, which captivates by its voluptuous, careless grace, and gives the idea that the hair, undone by some presuming hand, has been hastily gathered up, and

the great golden pin, with its big diamond head, stuck in sideways, — an ornament avoided by prudes, but none the less uncommonly becoming, — made her look like a provokingly seductive nymph, whom Priam himself, in spite of his years, could not have resisted.

She entered her splendid vis-à-vis, the gift of the tender-hearted and prodigal Prince de R ——, and which had cost not less than fifty thousand francs. Nor need such magnificence cause any surprise, when it is remembered that Mlle. Guimard used to drive at Longchamps in a coach with silver tires and drawn by six horses shod with silver shoes. Nothing indeed was too fine for these courtesans, who delighted in making filthy use of gold in order the better to flout the virtuous poor.

The carriage into which Rosette the dancer stepped, was at once most superb and most elegant, and no queen could have desired to own a more luxurious one. Besides Rosette's monogram, done in flowers, and placed on a gold ground in the centre of each of the larger panels, there was repeated on each of the side panels a basket of roses on which two doves were lasciviously billing and cooing, and a heart pierced by a dart, amid a wealth of quivers, torches, and other

attributes of Paphos. These ingenious emblems were surmounted by a wreath of flowers in mother-of-pearl, which was the most beautiful thing that could be seen by mortal eyes.

The rest of the coach was equally fine. The hammer-cloth, the footmen's straps, the wheels, the naves, the steps, were one and all so richly and carefully finished and bearing so plainly the imprint of the graces of the divinity who rode in this voluptuous car that it was impossible to look long enough at each of them.

When the carriage drove by every one declared that never had art been carried to such a degree of perfection, nor had gallantry ever gone farther.

It was in this splendid equipage that Rosette drove to Candale House, exciting the admiration of the men and the wrath of the women, who were indignant that a *creature* should make such a display of wealth, while they themselves had perforce to go on foot, or be driven in coaches a century old, old-fashioned and ridiculous, however well fitted they might be to transport sour homeliness and virtuous mummies.

The porter, a huge Swiss with appropriate crimson, grog-blossomed face, shaking the powder from his hair

as he moved, and wagging on the back of his livery coat an enormous queue adorned with a bag, hastened to throw open the gates, and the vis-à-vis, drawn by its four superb horses, their manes plaited with rose and silver favours, drove round the sanded court, and pulled up in front of the vestibule at the outer steps, that equalled in magnificence those of a royal seat, so majestic and splendid was the decoration.

A footman, seated on a bench, and playing cards with a groom, replied to Rosette's lackey that the Viscount de Candale was not at home.

Ill satisfied with the reply, which shattered her dearest hopes, Rosette called the footman to her in order to question him herself.

"What is your name? Lafleur or Labrie?" said she.

"Lafleur, at your service, Madam," answered the footman, with a bow.

"Answer me truthfully, Lafleur. Is your master really not at home?"

"No, Madam, he is not."

"You are sure that he has not given orders he would see no one?"

"If his lordship had given such orders with respect

to bores, he would be at home for you, Madam. The Viscount de Candale's orders are that fair ladies are to be admitted," replied the rascal, who piqued himself on his wit and at times read novels while on duty in the antechamber.

"You are polite, Lafleur; as polite as a valet in a play. Here are a couple of louis in return for your compliment. You say that your master's orders are to admit fair ladies. That is, of course, supposing there is not one already admitted? There is one with him now, is there not?"

"No indeed, Madam. When the Viscount has an affair of that sort on hand, he goes to his retreat in the suburbs."

"Of course he does," said Rosette. "What could I be thinking of?"

"Shall I mention to his lordship that you called, Madam?"

"Yes; do not fail to do so."

"Madam — ?" said the footman with a slight touch of slyness, though most respectfully.

"Rosette, simply; or, if you must have a title, Rosette from the Opera; that is as good as a duchess."

"Very good, Madam, I shall not forget, and mean-

while I shall drink to your health out of the two louis in company with my friend Champagne."

Rosette ordered her coachman to drive to the suburb of ——, where stood the Viscount de Candale's retreat, a house she knew of through the accounts of her friends, though, alas! she had never been there herself.

It was not usually in such a splendid equipage as hers that ladies drove to houses of that sort, but in plain carriages, the servants in gray liveries, and the lady's face carefully shrouded in a hood or concealed by a veil drawn well down over the face, or again in a closed sedan-chair, that stopped at the door, which was quickly opened and shut, so that inquisitive passers-by could see no more than the tip of a satin shoe and a gloved hand lifting the knocker or pulling at the bell. But as Rosette had no need to be careful of her reputation, and had not to think of an angry brother, a jealous husband, or a recognised patron, she risked nothing by showing herself openly, and consequently walked bravely up to the door of the little house.

It was at once opened by a servant in a fancy livery, who lived there in the event of a day or night appointment causing the Viscount to turn up, and Rosette was by him introduced into the sanctuary.

This venerable porter of Cythera had the serious, formal, discreet look of a man who thoroughly understands the importance of his situation, which was by no means a sinecure, for up to this time the Viscount had led a fast life. He appeared to be in no wise astonished at Rosette's presence, though he had not expected her. He knew that the Viscount had such winning and imperious ways that he often had not time to send word to the ministers of his pleasures. The man therefore assumed that Rosette was keeping an appointment made on the spur of the moment, and that the Viscount would not be long in coming.

The retreat, no trace of which was visible from outside, and which was hidden behind high, commonplace looking walls, made to look old so as not to attract attention, was one of the most elegant in that suburb. Everything in it was arranged to minister to mysterious delights.

It consisted of four or five rooms lighted from above by cupolas, and all that luxury has of rarest and most voluptuous was to be found in it. Mythological love scenes, due to the skilful and dainty brush of Boucher, the painter of the Graces and the Loves, embellished the ceilings and the tops of the doors. The wain-

scottings, carved and wrought with amazing fancifulness, sparkled with gilding of diverse hues, and represented shell-work, palm branches, and flowers, with pipes, doves' nests, love-knots, darts, hearts, cups, flagons, and other erotic and sensual devices, carved with infinite taste and delicacy.

The furniture was of the most tasteful description as well as most magnificent. There were tall mirrors that reflected the lovely beings which this enchanting place was privileged to receive, huge China vases of craquelé céladon filled with the costliest flowers, that were constantly renewed, and thick carpets, strewn with roses, to deaden the sound of steps.

Particular care had been bestowed upon the sofas, easy-chairs, and lounges. The sofa in the boudoir, especially, of azure blue, trimmed with fringes and knots of silver, would have formed a rich and commodious resting-place for the soul of Amanzeï, Schahabaham's favourite story-teller, and might have told as many tales as all the divans in Agra put together.

XVIII

ROSETTE, who longed to meet Candale, yet dreaded to find that he was not alone, was glad to discover that the retreat was untenanted.

By way of leaving a memento of her visit, she took off a superb bracelet, set with a cameo representing Terpsichore dancing, accompanied by Euterpe on the flute, and placed it on one of the cushions of the sofa in such a way that it should be readily seen and found. Then she withdrew after looking at her watch, like a person who cannot wait longer.

"I shall call again," said she to the lackey.

"Very good, Madam," answered he with a bow.

On leaving the retreat she had herself driven to Mlle. Guimard's, expecting to have news of the Viscount, who was a frequent visitor there. It turned out that the celebrated dancer had not seen him at all since the night of the supper. M. de Valnoir had in vain looked for him to assist at a fête he was giving, at which was to be performed one of Collé's most indecent and most amusing comic sketches.

Rosette returned home very sad and very much put out. There was only one thing to be done: to wait until the Viscount, impelled by sensual repentance, came to her of his own accord; a sad and sorrowful line of conduct most unpleasant to a woman in love.

The next day she returned to the retreat in the suburb, and found her bracelet just where she had left it; a proof that Candale was not engaged there with another woman.

But matters were becoming serious. A viscount of five-and-twenty, rich, handsome, and — keeping away from women! The thing was not natural. There must be a love affair behind it all, for happiness alone can draw a man away from pleasure.

After wandering for half an hour through the voluptuous retreat which she would have dearly loved to turn to account, Rosette withdrew, to the amazement of the old servant, who could not understand how it was that his master had twice failed to keep so pleasant an appointment. He could have understood his absenting himself the second time, but the fact that the Viscount had missed the first jarred on his principles as valet to Don Juans, for he had had the honour of serving

M. de Richelieu and of working with M. Lebel, who ministered to the pleasures of His Majesty. He consequently took it on himself to write to the Viscount a report of the occurrence. Here is the letter of the venerable servitor:—

My Lord Viscount, — I have always discharged with the utmost zeal the duties of the office which your lordship has been pleased to confer upon me, and I trust I have shown myself worthy of your lordship's trust. While I have no intention of prejudging your lordship's action, your lordship being the sole judge of your lordship's conduct, I believe it is my duty to inform your lordship that a very beautiful lady, who seems to me to belong to the Opera, has twice driven to the retreat of which I have the management and the care, in a very fine carriage, and without being masked or in any way disguised.

It may be that your lordship, having so many affairs on his hands, with princesses, duchesses, marchionesses, baronesses, justices' wives, and others, forgot this particular lady. I am aware that your lordship will not esteem this much of a triumph, seeing your lordship enjoys the possession of the most distinguished ladies; but, apart from the fact that this lady is really very charming, she is unquestionably very much in love with your lordship, and has gone away with a very heavy heart. I may affirm this, for we servants who see so many love affairs learn to judge of them. In this case it is genuine love, and I

venture to inform your lordship of the fact so that your lordship may then act as may be best in your lordship's opinion.

ROUX, *called* HECTOR,

Your lordship's devoted secret servant.

The letter reached Candale, who at once recognised Rosette in the portrait drawn of her, and promised himself to go to see her. But man proposes and love disposes, so that Candale, wearing Jack's drugget coat, turned up in the lace-maker's little room, instead of in the dancer's boudoir as he had intended.

Annoyed at the ill success of her attractions, Rosette became so gloomy that she thought she must be ill. She declared she was suffering from nerves and vapours, and settled herself in an invalid chair. Her friends called to see her, Mlle. Guimard, not a bad sort at bottom, among others.

Experienced as she was she saw at once what was the matter with Rosette, and instead of trying to find some barbarous name for her trouble, as any member of one of the four faculties would not have failed to do, she said straight out to her: —

"You are in love."

"I am, alas!"

"What do you mean by 'alas'? It is not so easy

to be in love. That is a piece of luck which has befallen me but once, and I would gladly give the thousand crowns a week the prince allows me to be in love once more."

"Yes, but it is a different thing to be in love and not loved in return."

"What does that matter? You are in love, and that is delightful. Besides, shapely and beautiful as you are, I fancy no man can resist you."

"There is nothing to laugh at."

"Am I to mourn over the man who has inspired you with passion? Is he a Hippolytus, a savage, shy fellow who cares for the woods only and prefers stags and deer to the fair sex, as does M. Racine's hero?"

"He is not quite so sylvan as all that."

"May I know his name?"

"The Viscount de Candale."

"The case is not a desperate one, then, for he is not very prudish, and the other evening, when you were supping with me, you two appeared to be on the best of terms."

"Yes, I thought he was rather in love with me; but since that night I have not set eyes on him."

"He cannot be lost, for all that. He is to be seen

everywhere : at Versailles, at the Cours-la-Reine, at the Palais-Royal, at the Tuileries, at the Opera, at the theatre, at the Spiritual Concerts."

" Nevertheless, for the past few days he has vanished altogether."

" He may have gone to some one of his estates, or accompanied the King to Marly."

" Not at all. I questioned Lafleur, his footman. He has taken none of his carriages with him, and he even turns up at Candale House from time to time, but very irregularly and makes no stay there."

" That is very strange."

" What can he be doing ? "

" If he were carrying on an intrigue with some great lady or other, we should have heard of it, for husbands and lovers come to us for consolation when they are visited with such misfortunes."

" That is true."

" If he had been caught by some stage beauty, she would by this time have proclaimed the fact ; when a girl is a supernumerary or a member of the chorus or even a leading dancer, she is not apt to hide the fact that she has hooked a Viscount de Candale."

" Then on whom has he bestowed his heart ? "

"I am much afraid he has got involved with some middle-class or legal female in the Marais or the Ile Saint-Louis."

"You terrify me, my dear Guimard."

"Otherwise, how comes it that you, my poor Rosette, who are one of the beauties of the Opera, should be sighing in vain for him?"

"I feel the truth of all you say; but what am I to do under the circumstances?"

"Have two other suitors pay court to you. It will help to divert your thoughts a bit."

"No, not that. I shall take your advice provided it does not mean giving up my love."

"Very well, that is frank and outspoken. I shall advise you as you wish, then. It is absolutely necessary to learn what M. de Candale is doing. You have quite made up your mind to that, have you not? You are not one of the faint-hearted who prefer uncertainty to truth?"

"No, indeed. But how am I to ascertain what he is doing? I have done my best to do so and I have failed."

"If you want to learn a man's secret it is not best to go to him to find it out."

"Then how would you set about it?"

"M. de Sartines, who is a great friend of mine, has done me more than one service in matters that come under his ken, and in the politest way possible."

"The head of the police?"

"Exactly."

"But what has the police to do with love affairs?"

"A good deal. I had a lover whom I suspected of being unfaithful to me behind my back; not that I cared, really, but I do not like to be fooled. So M. de Sartines lent me, in order to find out what my young gentleman was doing, a couple of his cleverest detectives, wonderful hands at working in the dark, and superior to the most skilful valets in plays, — men of genius, who can read the letters you have in your pockets, recognise people under their masks, and tell you every one of your secrets."

"What was the result?"

"My two Sbrigani proved to me within twenty-four hours that I was being abominably betrayed, and I had the pleasure of overwhelming the culprit with such unquestioned proofs of his villany that he thought the devil, or a wizard at least, had been at work."

"How wonderful!"

"I shall go with you to M. de Sartines to ask him to place these two fellows at your service, which he will assuredly do, unless they happen to be engaged on matters concerning the safety of the State."

Rosette took up the idea with the eagerness of a woman, jealous and in love, who sees a way of clearing up her doubts, and the two dancers repaired to M. de Sartines', whom they found in a room filled with wigs, busy trying on a new one. He received them in the most affable and gracious manner, and had much pleasure in provisionally attaching to Rosette's service Masters Clochebourde and Pincecroc, who, like veteran artists, could not repress a smile when the dancer told them what she wanted to know.

The next day a brief report, very neatly written, turned up on Rosette's pillow, having been placed there by some unknown hand. It contained these words: —

"The Viscount de Candale goes every day to the house of M. Bonnard, his steward, and there changes his garments for the dress of a young clerk in the Salt-Tax Office. Thus disguised he repairs to Rue ——, No. —, on the third floor, to the room of Miss Jill, lace-worker, who recently moved in there. He remains a couple of hours or thereabouts.

"Last Sunday, the Viscount and Miss Jill went off into the country and dined at the 'White Rabbit' tavern. We have not ascertained exactly what they ate, but if desired we shall do our best — "

"Great heavens!" groaned Rosette, as she perused the fatal report; "a grisette is worse than a middle-class woman even!"

Then she fell back and swooned away, nor could she be brought to save by the use of Hungary water and General Lamothe's drops, which are well known to be specifics in such cases.

XIX

MME. DE CHAMPROSÉ'S whim to turn herself into a grisette was to make more than one heart sore. The sensitive druggist of the Rue Sainte-Avoie had been hit hard by Cupid at the Moulin-Rouge dance. Now everybody is aware that this little god uses two different kinds of darts when shooting at men. The first are tipped with gold, the second with lead. The former inspire love, the latter antipathy, or coldness at least.

The unhappy druggist had been shot through so cleanly by one of the former, that the point stuck out between his shoulders, for the string had been well stretched and the bow well bent.

One of the second sort had been sent into Mme. de Champrosé, who cared no more for the druggist than if he were not in existence.

To be heir presumptive to a fine drug business in the Rue Sainte-Avoie, at the sign of "The Silver Pestle," and to be dying of love for a penniless grisette, is both sad and humiliating.

Yet such was the position of young Rougeron, the Alcibiades, the Hamilcar, the Galaor of his quarter, whom every Denise, Nicole, and Javotte gazed at tenderly as they passed the shop where, seated at the neatly polished counter, he was engaged in grinding drugs, spices, or aromatics, or else rested himself after the day's labour by very dexterously making conical paper bags out of the works of diverse authors, some of whom, nevertheless, were members of the French Academy.

More than one beauty in the Rue Maubuée, the Rue du Plâtre, the Rue Geoffroy-l'Angevin and Bar-du-Bec, dreamed of sitting, dressed in a Siamese calico, at that coveted counter; for if the drug business marches with the grocery business on the one hand, on the other it merges into that of the apothecary, and thus acquires a certain majesty that raises it considerably in public opinion.

But their dreams and sighs were in vain, for Rougeron thought of Miss Jill only, while she, on account of the different effect of the darts I spoke of just now, did not waste a single thought upon him.

How he managed to come upon the pretty lace-maker again is a point that, so far, history has not cleared up.

It is probable that he met her by chance and followed her to her lodging, or it may be that the shopman, Justina's lover, who was a friend of his, allowed himself to be indiscreet. What is certain, without wasting time upon an unimportant point, is that one fine morning Jill saw entering her room the druggist's son, looking most woe-begone, ill at ease, and stupid, twisting his hat in his hands, bowing with all the awkwardness of a chorister, and as much puzzled what to do with his legs, his arms, his whole person, in fact, as a village suitor in the presence of his bride's grand-parents.

He was so hopelessly dazed — for love makes men stupid, while, no one knows why, it makes girls wide-awake — that when Jill told him to sit down, he, the cock of the walk and the coolest lady-killer in the dances at the dance-gardens, nearly sat down on the floor, like the handsome Leander or Jeannot in the farces at the Saint-Laurent fair.

Jill, seeing how red he was, how he gasped, how he perspired, took pity on his embarrassment and opened the conversation with a commonplace remark.

"What chance has brought you here, my dear sir?"

"I happened to be passing this way, and I thought

I would improve the opportunity to pay you a visit, for I have not set eyes on you since that memorable dance."

"You honour me highly, and I deeply appreciate it," returned Jill, in a cold tone that destroyed whatever politeness and cordiality her words might have conveyed.

The conversation was on the point of dropping again, when the unhappy druggist, pulling himself together with a great effort, went on with much fire and vehemence; —

"No, Miss Jill, I did not happen to be passing by, as I said just now. I came on purpose to see you, after calling up all my courage, for I have been so wretched at not seeing you again. Until now I have had flirtations, but now I am in love, most unmistakably. I can tell by the pain I suffer. I cannot eat, drink, or sleep, much as I would like to sleep at least, for then I should dream of you, and that would be something. Before I made your acquaintance I was considered a smart fellow in my business, and pretty witty into the bargain: my jokes were quoted from the Rue de la Verrerie to the Rue des Vieilles-Audriettes; but now I make mistakes in weighing, my paper bags come unrolled, I give customers vanilla instead of cinnamon,

and I am always getting tangled up in syrups. I can no longer distinguish an alkali from an acid, and quite recently I spoiled a sunflower tincture, in mixing which I have always been an adept. Once I had always a joke ready, and said the funniest things to my customers, especially to the girls, but now it is all over: I have become awkward, stupid, foolish; which proves, Miss, that I love you, for such a state is not natural, and it is plain that the wicked little god has to do with it."

While listening to this strange declaration of love, Jill more than once was tempted to laughter, but the unfortunate druggist spoke with such fire and conviction, he was so plainly serious in spite of his absurd speech, that she managed to repress her inclination and to reply gently enough in order not to aggravate a sorrow that, although ridiculous, was none the less genuine: —

"What you tell me is most unfortunate, Mr. Rougeron; but I do not see how I can help it."

"The one who has hurt me can cure me."

"I should be glad to restore your reason, but not in the way you mean."

"How, then?"

"By advising you to give up all thoughts of me; that is what any true girl would tell you."

"You do not love me, then?"

"I do not, and let not my words pain you. No one can master one's inclination. Denise loves you, and you do not care for her."

"I know that; but I think that if you would only listen to my suit, you would end by caring for me."

"One does not end by loving people; one ought to begin by doing that."

"In love affairs, I dare say, but not in marriage. It is not necessary in that case; there is the virtue of the sacrament, and habit; attentions and children do the rest. Yes, Jill, I love you so madly that I shall marry you, if need be, in spite of the difference between a druggist in a good business and a mere lace-worker. I dare say my parents will object at first, and our friends will say I have married beneath me, but your beauty will overcome all opposition and justify my resolution.

"Divine Jill! I put the 'Silver Pestle' at your feet, with its oak counter, its labelled porcelain jars, its shelves and cases filled with cochineal, saffron, mastic, ultramarine, dragon's blood, bezoar, gum tragacanth,

sandarac, cinnamon, benzoin, and Indian aromatic gums worth their weight in gold; likewise the three thousand a year I have from my mother's estate; my house in the Rue de la Culture-Sainte-Catherine which brings in a good rental; a vineyard near Orléans, which produces a very nice wine; and finally, dresses, linen, and jewellery."

"That is all very fine," returned Mme. de Champrosé, who was not at all impressed by this persuasive inventory, which ought to have dazzled Jill, and which the amorous druggist reckoned would prove irresistible. "I cannot, however, consent to be a cause of discord between your parents and yourself."

"If that is the only difficulty, I can remove it," returned the druggist, white with emotion.

"And besides," went on Jill, "in spite of all the advantages of the match and the honour you would do me, I do not feel the least desire to accept your proposal."

"You love some one else, Miss Jill, or you would not refuse my offer like that."

"If that were the case I think I have the right to bestow my heart where I please."

"And I suppose it is that fellow Jack who is

the happy man. A country lout from Auxerre who can never have more than twelve hundred a year salary in the Salt-Tax Office. That 's a fine match!"

"It is a fine match for me, since I have no dowry. But pray, dear Mr. Rougeron, do not indulge in the bad taste of running down your rival."

Without another word the druggist, quite overcome, and pale with anger and jealousy, took his leave, turning over projects of vengeance to be wreaked upon Jill or Jack, or both of them; for hell hath no fury like a druggist scorned.

XX

I LEFT Rosette swooning away on receiving the news that the Viscount de Candale was smitten with a grisette. When she recovered her senses her one thought was to see for herself that Jill who was so beautiful that she could eclipse a goddess of the Opera, and actually debauch into love a young nobleman who had until then been quite satisfied with mere pleasure.

She understood, thanks to woman's unerring instinct, that the lace-worker must be rarely attractive to exercise such influence upon a thorough man of the world such as Candale. She was chiefly alarmed at the thought that Jill, though courted by the Viscount, had not left her little room and been transferred to some small mansion, furnished with ruinous luxury, as is the way when a nobleman's fancy for a girl is something more than a passing whim. Either Jill's virtue must be proof against all temptation, or the Viscount must entertain the highest respect for her, else he would not have acted with her in a way so utterly different from that

in which he behaved towards other women of that class.

She understood that the Viscount should have put on a disguise in order to gain admittance to the girl's room without frightening her; but she could not make out why he should keep it up. In order to remove her uncertainty, she sent for a sedan-chair, put on a dark-coloured wrapper, got in, and told the bearers to take her to the Rue de ——.

Jill, who fancied herself unknown to everybody and safe as a forest bird in her love retreat, was immensely surprised on seeing a beautifully dressed lady who said to her, with a good deal of haughtiness:

"Is this Miss Jill?"

"Yes, Madam."

"You make lace, I believe."

"Yes, Madam."

"Can you make me three yards of lace from this pattern?"

"I can manage it, though it will be a long and difficult piece of work," answered Mme. de Champrosé, feeling she must keep up her character of lace-maker in the presence of a stranger whose motives she could not suspect.

"How much will it cost?"

"Three louis, Madam."

"I will pay you in advance; here they are," said Rosette, desirous of gaining time in which to examine her rival. But much as she desired to think her ugly, she could not help owning to herself that Jill was lovely, or angrily admiring her beautiful blue eyes, at once so tender and so proud, her rosy mouth, her delicate complexion, her exquisite features, her shapely neck, her modest charms, set off by a neat dress; and she sighed as she gazed.

She herself was certainly as beautiful as Jill, yet there was something indefinable about the lace-maker, a peculiar attraction, a natural high-bred air, an aristocratic look, if such a term could be applied to a mere working-girl.

"How comes it that she is more beautiful than I am?" said the dancer to herself, as she looked at the grisette. "My eyes are as fine as hers, my complexion is just as brilliant, and I have a better figure. I wonder if it can be because she joins the beauty of the soul to the beauty of the body, as that philosopher, the disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom I allow to eat with the servants, is in the habit of saying? I

came to crush her, and I feel almost awkward in her presence."

As these thoughts passed rapidly through Rosette's mind there was a somewhat embarrassing silence for a few moments, which was at last broken by the dancer.

"My dear child," she said, in a most affectionate tone, "my order for lace is but a pretext. I really wanted to see you and to talk with you on some important matters that concern no one but you and me. I have never seen you, it is true, yet I feel the deepest interest in you."

"Your words, Madam, are a riddle that I cannot read."

What, indeed, could there be in common between these two women, who had never met before, and probably would never meet again?

"Miss Jill, you have a lover."

This startling apostrophe made Mme. de Champrosé flush hotly, but remembering that she was Jill, she controlled herself and preserved a haughty silence.

"It is perhaps too much to say a lover; I should have said a sweetheart, rather, as people in your condition call him."

"Whether I have a sweetheart or not, I cannot see that it is any business of yours. I beg you will leave me, Madam. Whatever your object may be, I will not listen to your remarks."

"It matters very much to me that you should listen. I love the Viscount de Candale."

"And as it is Mr. Jack whom I love, I do not care whether you do or not."

"You will care more than you think for."

"Why should I?"

"The Viscount de Candale and Mr. Jack are one and the same man."

"I do not believe a word of it. All you want to do is to torment me. At all events I am not jealous of you, for he does not love you, else you would not have come to look for the Viscount in Jill's rooms."

"Alas! you are quite right, Miss Jill. He does not love me, and I see the reason why. You are beautiful, very beautiful; more beautiful than I am. But while you might accept Mr. Jack as a sweetheart, do you think you can accept the Viscount de Candale, a young nobleman of illustrious family, who stands well at court, and who has assumed that disguise simply for the purpose of seducing you, as was the wont of Jupi-

ter when he took his pleasure with mere mortals? He seeks only to suborn you, to take advantage of your innocence. Your love affair with him can never come to anything. You belong to two classes of society so wide apart that your very lives are necessarily sundered. What can you be to him? A means to momentary pleasure. Before long he will return to his own world in which he shines so naturally, and you will be left out in the cold to weep over your own credulity.

"No doubt he will give you all the money you want; he will settle an income upon you, but that is not what you desire, since you are a girl of principle and care for love only.

"Of course you may be cherishing the hope that Mr. Jack will marry you; but there is no chance of his doing so, for Viscount de Candale will be a Duke and grandee of Spain of the first class on his uncle's death."

"Well, who knows?" returned Jill, smiling quite unconcernedly. "We can talk of that when you come for your lace."

"I do believe that she is not afraid of his playing her false! These grisettes, with their seeming disinter-

estedness and virtue, are infinitely cleverer than we stage women, and that is saying not a little. Oh! dear heart mine! what a mess you got into when you fell in love with Candale!"

Did this strange revelation, so curiously made, pain or please the person to whom it was addressed? Jill was the loser, no doubt, but Mme. de Champrosé was the gainer. She was pleased with herself for having chosen so wisely; she was glad she had not been mistaken, and congratulated her heart on not having aided her whim, born of weariness and her maid's suggestions, to be loved by a plebeian.

She felt happy as does the ermine on finding that its snowy fur is spotless. At bottom, although she was very much in love with Jack, she did think his name rather vulgar, and was quite pleased to find that "Viscount de Candale" was tacked on to it. She found in this fact the explanation of much of the elegance, the high breeding, and the refinement which had surprised her on the part of a clerk in the Salt-Tax Office.

She yielded to her love in greater security, for now she had no apprehension as to the consequences, and felt that what had been a passing fancy might well become a lasting union.

Thus Rosette, instead of spoiling Candale's love, had served it, but then, of course, she had no means of knowing that Jill was the Marchioness de Champrosé; she had not inquired of the detectives, who, like the discreet fellows they were, had left her in ignorance of the fact, in obedience to the orders of the ever prudent, discreet, and wise M. de Sartines.

When Jack came to pay his customary visit to Jill, she received him in the most ceremonious manner and with every mark of the deepest respect.

"What fine curtseys you are dropping me to-day, Miss Jill. You have allowed me to become used to a more friendly and familiar mode of welcome. I would rather have one kiss than thirty curtseys."

"You see I did not know that I had the honour of receiving so exalted a personage in my humble abode."

"What personage? What do you mean? What is the meaning of all this foolery?" asked Candale, rather troubled by the turn the conversation was taking.

"It is really too much honour for poor Jill."

"Pray cease making fun of me. Jack and Jill may give each other pleasure, but they do not bestow honour upon each other. We both belong to the same class."

"No; Miss Jill can no longer claim to be the equal of the Viscount de Candale. Your ancestry, Mr. Jack, — allow me to call you once again by the name under which I have loved you so well, — your ancestry goes much farther back than mine."

Candale was staggered by the unexpected blow, but he soon pulled himself together, and with much nobility he replied: —

"I shall not deny my name, no matter how you may have learned it. I am Viscount de Candale; it is due to my ancestors to acknowledge the fact when I am asked to do so."

"But what an advantage to take of a simple young girl, my lord! Why did you deceive me?"

"Deceive you? I did not deceive you. Look for yourself; are not my eyes filled with love and fire? Candale confirms what Jack told you."

"But Jill must not listen."

"Why not? Did not Jill listen to Jack? Are you going to keep me at arm's length because I am only a viscount? Every one cannot belong to the middle class; it was not my luck to be born without a title, and you ought to forgive me."

"But how came the Viscount de Candale to be at a wedding-dance at the Moulin-Rouge?"

"Simply through a passing fancy, through lack of something to do, through weariness of monotonous pleasures, seeking after the unknown and undefined hopes of the heart that seeks to find what it dreams of, and which, thanks to my disguise, I have managed to come upon. You made friends with the clerk, you would have repelled the Viscount.

"Listen, Jill," he pursued in a more serious tone; "I love you as I have never loved any one; you may trust me for that. Far from concealing my love, I mean to make it my pride. I mean to set you in your proper place, to set your beauty in a rich frame; to fill your life with delight and enjoyment; to make you wealthy, brilliant, and happy so that duchesses themselves shall envy you; to hand you on silver salvers the golden keys of all my mansions. The King's mistress, who is almost Queen of France, shall turn pale as she sees you go by, for she will feel that she has been removed from the throne of beauty, which she fills only because you consent to remain in the shade. My life, my blood, my wealth, all are yours. I bestow them all upon you."

"Yes, all save that ring, which Jack would have slipped on Jill's finger, and which alone would give me the right to accept M. de Candale's treasures. Farewell, Viscount; we must never meet again. Farewell for ever! Ah! Mr. Jack, why, why did you come to the Moulin-Rouge dance!"

XXI

IT would take a more skilful and more practised pen than mine to describe accurately the disappointment of the Abbé when he came round at his usual hour to Champrosé House and was informed by the porter that the Marchioness had gone to spend six weeks on the estates of her aunt, the old Baroness de Kerkaradec, in Brittany.

The Abbé, rejoicing in the thought of seeing the Marchioness, whose company he was very fond of, had come along with a knowing, happy air, treading lightly on the tips of his gold-buckled shoes, his short cloak gallantly thrown on his arm, his limbs set off by thin black silk stockings, and, as the saying is, *in fiocchi*.

He was rosier and more blooming than usual; his smile, due to inward content, made his thirty-two pearly teeth shine brightly.

He had prepared two or three almost new jokes and about the same number of yet unsaid compliments, reckoning greatly that they would prove effective. He had never felt in such high spirits, and in order to get

to Champrosé House earlier, he had bidden his man say his prayers for him.

Poor Abbé! He had not had the slightest warning presentiment of misfortune.

He had hoped, that day, by dint of grace and amiability, to supplant the monkey, at once his pupil and his rival, in Mme. de Champrosé's heart, and there was she gone off to a wild, unapproachable land, a horrible place, worse than the Chersonese, and inhabited by Topinambous, Algonquins, and Hurons! It was a staggering blow.

He could not quite stop his smile, but it became less by half, which amounted with him to the highest expression of sadness, and he withdrew slowly, cast down and wretched, allowing the taffeta of his cloak to fall into despairing folds, and unconsciously murmuring to himself: —

"What a shockingly improper thing to do, this going off light foot and silently to that ancient aunt's, and to drop us all, her friends, her guests, her admirers, and her pets. To whom can I repeat the impromptu lines I laboured at so hard this morning for her benefit? Am I to let them get stale until she returns? Ah! fate most cruel! Ah! destiny most dire! What has

this poor Court Abbé done to you to be persecuted thus?"

After the Abbé came Bafogne the financier, in a coach overloaded with gilt and paintings and showy coats of arms — Bafogne had recently purchased a patent of nobility — with an army of footmen hanging on behind, and a corpulent coachman sprawling on the box.

The financier descended heavily from the sumptuous vehicle. He was dressed with astounding luxury: his coat, vest and breeches were of gold brocade lined with silver brocade, and covered with diamond buttons the size of snuff-boxes. He was as gorgeous as a peacock, for having long since made up his mind to declare his love to Mme. de Champrosé, and having appointed this particular day for the performing of this function, which troubled him greatly, he had got himself up to kill and made himself look his very best, which means that he was very ugly, for a man cannot buy beauty as he buys clothes.

On learning of the unaccountable departure which upset all his plans, he got into a violent rage, turned purple instead of merely scarlet, cursed, swore, stormed, struck the ground with his stick, a golden-headed one,

chased by Roettiers, the King's own engraver, and nearly broke it, although it was a priceless cane, and finally addressed to the porter the following haughty remark, which testified to his implicit belief in the power of money: —

"You rascal, tell me your mistress has not gone away, and I shall give you a hundred louis!"

The conscientious porter, who would have been delighted to earn the reward, replied ruefully that his mistress had indeed left the night before on her way to the residence of her aunt, the Baroness de Kerkaradec, near Pen-Marck, on Audierne Bay. He thought it proper to add these details by way of marking his sense of the financier's splendid offer, and was rewarded with a handful of crowns.

The financier was followed by the Commander de Livry and the Chevalier, who drove up in a phaeton drawn by big English horses, a fashion set by M. de Lauraguais who had just returned from London, whither he had gone to learn to use his brains.

The Commander was markedly grieved at Mme. de Champrosé's absence; her cook held views on his art which coincided with his own ideas of good cheer. No one better than that cook managed a bisque and force-

meat balls, and he was incomparable in turning out woodcock salmi. This caused the Commander to attend the Marchioness's suppers most regularly. It was with difficulty that he could be induced to eat elsewhere, and next to his own wines, which he cared for with infinite solicitude, he considered there were none fit for a man of taste to drink save the Marchioness's, and her butler entertained for him the greatest veneration on account of his profound knowledge in this line.

The Chevalier, deceived by the accounts he received from Justina of the progress he was making in her mistress's affections, reckoned on a happy moment soon coming for him, and therefore was greatly put out at seeing the gratification of his hopes indefinitely postponed.

He fancied that, thanks to his wit and his handsome limbs, of which he was very proud, he had made an impression upon the lovely Marchioness, and he raged as he thought of the number of clever things and of the posturings he would have to put in before he could make up for lost time. But it was of no use to be annoyed, and the four frequenters of Champrosé House therefore dispersed in search of the pleasantest way of spending their evening.

The Abbé went to the Chief Justice's lady, but he found her pug so ill-trained and her monkey so unpleasant that he did not much enjoy himself. Besides, the lady's face was becoming very much blotched, and unfortunately the scarlet spots were most irregularly distributed; the modest flush that should have adorned her cheeks had transferred itself to her nose, and there, spite of the chicory and cucumber water freely used upon it, was turning into a most brilliant poppy red. When the Abbé compared that ardent nose to the little white nose of Mme. de Champrosé, he felt bitterly indeed the full extent of his misfortune.

In vain he tried to find an opening for the society verses he had composed that morning: the circumstances were unfavourable; they would have sounded like coarse insults and not like compliments. Borne down by all these reverses, he proved dull, and the Chief Justice's lady said to Baroness de B——:

"There is no doubt that our dear Abbé is growing stupid."

It would not have mattered so much had the supper been good, but the wines were doctored and the servants chary in helping him; his plate was whipped away if he but turned his head, the domestics being in

a hurry to get done and to remove the remains of the meal. Notwithstanding the wealth of plate and the brilliant glass and lighting, the supper was no better than a tavern one, as is always the case in houses where ostentation mingles with avarice.

So the poor Abbé took his leave, hungry and suffering from indigestion at one and the same time, and returned home thinking somewhat seriously of turning Trappist.

Nor was Bafogne any luckier. Not knowing what to do with himself, he went to see Desobry, who helped him to wait until great ladies should prove kind to him; but as the courtesan had expected her Crœsus to spend the evening elsewhere, she had made arrangements not to feel lonely. Thus it was that the financier, who entered unexpectedly and with the assurance of the man who runs the establishment, came upon a little table with a nice little supper laid thereon, and caught sight of the end of a sword and the tails of a uniform coat vanishing through a door that was at once closed.

In vain did Desobry try to explain to him that it is the most natural thing in the world for a woman to have covers laid for two when she is alone; the financier refused to swallow so plausible an explanation, for

he had seen with his own eyes the tails of a coat vanishing in the next room, the door of which he insisted on opening.

Forth came a handsome Red Musketeer, who did not look in the least put out, and explained to Bafogne that he was Desobry's cousin; that she was a most respectable person, and that he intended she should be treated with due deference. If she were not, he swore mightily that he would crop the ears of any man who failed to be civil to her.

The financier was not quite a hero, and was anxious to keep his ears on, long though they were; so he looked askance at Desobry, like the he-goats of which Vergil speaks, and withdrew without a word, but slamming the doors noisily, leaving a free field to the woman and the musketeer, who impertinently laughed as loud as he could.

And that was the end of Bafogne's evening.

The Commander de Livry tried to console himself by devouring almost the whole of a boar's head with pistachio, and it nearly killed him, though he washed it down freely with numerous bumpers of wine, and had a stomach like an ostrich, a bird famed for its digestive powers. That night he had a dreadful dream. The

boar, whose head he had eaten, was trampling upon him, headless, and trying to crush him by rolling over and over him.

The Commander was much alarmed by the vision and consulted Tronchin.

The famous physician smilingly replied: —

"The dream signifies that boar's head is heavy and that you will have indigestion if you eat any more."

As for the Chevalier, he was in such a vile temper, so snappish, so sour that he quarrelled with Versac in the wings at the Opera. A meeting was arranged between them, and the Chevalier was slashed across the face in a way that came nigh to blinding him, and compelled him to wear for some days a great patch of court-plaster, which made him look so comical that it nearly led to another duel.

Such were the painful results entailed upon Mme. de Champrosé's quartet of habitual visitors, in consequence of her whim to spend six weeks with her aunt, dowager Baroness de Kerkaradec, while she was in reality being made pressing love to by Jack in her little lace-maker's room.

Her ladyship had not, however, anticipated the des-

perate resolve to which came the four whose occupation was gone.

After trying in vain for a few days to settle down elsewhere with some degree of comfort, the Abbé, the financier, the Chevalier and the Commander individually bethought themselves of a plan of which each man believed himself the sole inventor, and which each one proceeded to carry out as secretly as he could manage.

This brought about the complication I shall now describe.

XXII

KERKARADEC MANOR, a remnant of the days of old, is a Gothic fortalice with walls fifteen feet thick, in which the windows form small rooms, with crenellations, lookouts, machicolations, barbicans, a drawbridge, a portcullis, and all the rest of the feudal appurtenances.

At the four corners rise four turrets with pepper-pot roofs, topped with fish-tail vanes rusting in the sea breeze, the ocean billows breaking upon the rocks at the foot of the castle and keeping up their wearisome and monotonous plaint day and night. Clouds of martins circle and scream around the place in an effort to impart a semblance of life to the walls blackened by age.

Gloomy indeed is Kerkaradec Manor, which was erected at a time when taste had not yet been formed by Mansart, Gabriel, Ledoux, and Servandoni, the men who have enabled us to appreciate the regular beauties and the true style of architecture.

It is amazing that any one should be able to live

away from the atmosphere of the Court, far from the sunshine of Versailles, the only one that really gives out any light, among peasants as fierce as wild animals, and gentlemen as rough as their ancestors of ferocious memory. Yet the Dowager Baroness de Kerkaradec had solved the difficulty, though noble-born and nearly eighty years of age. It is true that she had had time to forget Paris, where she had been brought up, since she had taken up her residence by the lonely bay of Audierne.

No fitter mistress could have been found for the old castle. The frame and the picture matched each other, for the Dowager Baroness de Kerkaradec, with her cap with long lappets after the fashion of the early part of the reign of Louis XIV, her gown of stiff stuff, brocatelle or silk damask, that seemed cut from an old curtain, her big owl-like eyes, with great rings around them and divided by her thin nose that gleamed like a beak, her mouth sunken through the loss of her teeth, appeared to be the very spirit of past ages come back to haunt the old-time building. In spite of her witch-like air, which was increased by the loneliness and wildness of the place, her ladyship of Kerkaradec was a person of proud port and high breeding, and it was plain that the

blood which ran in the old veins under the parchment skin, wrinkled as a mummy's, was untainted and sprang from a noble source.

The old lady's dearest dream was to have a partner at cards, for all the old gentlemen among her friends had long since passed away; she had but distant relatives and some who were nearer to her, but who did not live in Brittany; nor could the priest manage to come often, his house being at a considerable distance from the castle and the roads from the one to the other being vile.

So the poor Dowager, seated in a tapestry arm-chair near a window, was gravely engaged in playing by herself, her right hand standing for her, and her left for her imaginary opponent, when an old servant, in a state of great bewilderment, entered the room and said to her mistress: —

"Your ladyship, the bell at the drawbridge has rung!"

"Nonsense! You fancied you heard it. Who is there who would come to ring at our poor deserted dovecote?"

"I did not fancy it, your ladyship, and Yvon has gone to open."

"You are crazy. No one ever comes here. The priest comes in through the breach in the park wall and the postern door."

"Some one rang, your ladyship, and rang thrice."

"Enough. The last time the drawbridge was lowered was for M. de Penhoël, because he had come on horseback, and he died — let me see — why, he died fifteen years ago," said the old lady, reckoning on her thin, yellow fingers.

Nevertheless old Bertha had not been mistaken, and in a few minutes a tall fellow, half lackey, half ploughboy, announced that a gentleman, whose carriage had broken down at a short distance from the castle, begged to be permitted to enter.

"The guest God sends is welcome," said the old lady, who maintained the traditions of the olden time. "Show the gentleman in."

The lackey withdrew and the Baroness de Kerkaradec could not help saying: —

"He shall play cards with me, this heaven-sent guest."

A gentleman of our acquaintance, none less than the Chevalier, recognisable by the red scar on his cheek due to the pinking he had had to submit to from Versac,

drew near the Dowager's chair as she rose slightly, and bowed low.

"Your ladyship, I am the Chevalier de Saint-Hubert."

"I am the Baroness de Kerkaradec."

"My stupid postilion upset my chaise and smashed the wheel in a rut, and I find I cannot proceed until my carriage has been repaired."

"You are at home here, sir. I trust you were not hurt in your fall?"

"No, Madam. I was fortunate to fall easily, being tumbled out upon a soft, mossy, and grassy slope."

"I am glad it was no worse. Well, then, until it is time for dinner, you might have a game of piquet with me."

"Gladly," returned the Chevalier, promptly availing himself of the chance to remain. And he took the cards, shuffled and cut them with a skill that delighted the Baroness.

"What the devil induced the Marchioness de Champrosé to come and bury herself in such a nest for owls and rats with an old mummy like that? I must say women are a crazy lot. I wonder where she can be. No doubt in her own room, killing time by reading,

making lint, or sleeping. She will have to come to dinner, and then I shall see her, and my determination to follow her up at all costs will produce its due effect upon her and help on my cause."

Scarcely had the Dowager and the Chevalier played a couple of games when Bertha, more bewildered than the first time, came in with the news that the drawbridge bell had again rung.

"Open, then."

And presently the lackey showed in a very neat, very clean Court Abbé, who appeared greatly annoyed and surprised at seeing the Chevalier already settled in the place.

The reader has recognised the Abbé, that goes without saying. He had been unable to stand the Chief Justice's lady for more than two days, and had set off in pursuit of Mme. de Champrosé.

Concealing his annoyance to the best of his ability, he stated his name and told his story, which was exactly like that related by the Chevalier. Mme. de Kerkaradec accounted for the double accident by the bad condition of the roads, which were killing to animals, men, and vehicles, and then she invited the Abbé to sit down to the green table.

Half an hour later, or thereabouts, the bell sounded for the third time, and Bafogne entered, covered with mud; for being heavier and stouter than the Chevalier and the Abbé, his upset had not been managed as dexterously.

He was welcomed as cordially as the others had been, and the Dowager, raising her hands, so thin that they were diaphanous, said in accents of ecstatic joy: —

"Heaven has willed that I should not die without enjoying once more a game of whist. We are four, just the right number. Praised be the name of the Lord!"

Before long arrived the Commander, rather badly shaken, and provided with the same pretext.

"Pray be seated, sir, and when one of these gentlemen is tired, you can cut in," said the old lady, overjoyed at her abundance of partners.

To each of Mme. de Champrosé's suitors had the same thought occurred to join her at Kerkaradec Castle, and as none of them was particularly brilliant, each and all had resorted to the same means, which, of course, was the most commonplace. Each of them had fondly fancied that the bright thought had been his only, and they were most comically aggrieved to find themselves met together in the old Breton lady's home.

While they played their hands with the worst grace possible, they glared askance at each other like so many Japanese warty monsters, such as are set on mantelpieces and shelves.

But that was nothing in comparison with the disappointment that awaited them.

Dinner was announced, and the company proceeded to the dining-room, the Chevalier taking in the hostess. But oh, surprise! oh, rage! oh, despair! the Marchioness de Champrosé did not show up: she was not in the castle!

Where could she be, then? No doubt off with some lover or another.

The Chevalier dexterously brought the conversation round to the subject of the missing lady, who, he affirmed, had often spoken to him of Baroness de Kerkaradec with infinite respect and affection.

"I fancy," said the old lady, "that my wrinkles frighten her away. I have not seen her for six years, and have not had a letter from her for more than two."

"Sold!" exclaimed in unison, but under their breath, the Chevalier, the financier, the Abbé, and the Commander.

They took a day or two to rest and to play cards

with the Dowager, as civility demanded, and then started back to Paris together, very sore and very angry.

Of course they told the story to every one who cared to listen to it, in town, at Court, in clubs, in ladies' chambers, at the Opera, at the theatre, so that ere long the one topic of conversation was the disappearance of the Marchioness de Champrosé, accompanied by a gallant stranger, for in that ingenious and positive eighteenth century not a soul fancied for an instant that she had gone off alone.

Candale himself learned the news and was greatly surprised at it; but he was very far from suspecting that he alone could have told the whereabouts of the fair fugitive.

XXIII

THE situation was becoming complicated. The Marchioness had learned through Justina, who kept in touch with Champrosé House, of the trip of her four suitors to Kerkaradec and of the talk which had been the consequence thereof.

The business might have proved serious had Jack really been Jack only, but it was quite different since he turned out to be Viscount de Candale. Yet, ere throwing off for ever her pretty disguise as Jill, which she had worn for a few days, the Marchioness desired to carry out her part to the end, and felt desirous, since she had entered upon the adventure, to reap the fullest benefit from it.

She became ambitious of winning by the aid of her natural charms only — seeing she had allowed herself to indulge in the romantic wish to be loved for her own sake — a triumph her title, her wealth, and her high station would have secured for her with the greatest ease.

On the other hand, Viscount de Candale, on return-

ing home, and laying away Jack's modest garments, realised that he was hopelessly in love with Jill and that he could not live without her.

He therefore visited her again, wearing this time the dress of his rank, a splendid and magnificent costume that set off wonderfully his handsome figure. He had put on his orders, as for a ceremonious visit.

When he walked into the room, beaming and superb, Jill thrilled with pleasure, and came to the conclusion that the Viscount was handsomer than the clerk.

"Oh! Mr. Jack," she exclaimed, feigning to perfection surprise and grief, — "my lord, I mean, it is unkind of you to pursue a poor girl whose life you have upset, and who is doing her best to forget you and to sink back into the obscurity in which you found her."

"Jill, I beseech you to continue to Candale the affection, the love you seemed to feel for Jack."

"Do not recall the name under which you surprised into love the heart that believed it might bestow itself."

"So be it. Let us speak no more of Jack; let us speak of Candale," said the Viscount as he threw himself at Jill's feet. "What do you mean, you wicked

girl, you coldly virtuous being, by playing upon my sufferings? Is it because I am a viscount that you refuse to receive me? Then you are prouder of your lowly birth than I of my aristocratic descent? Would I love you any the less if your rank were that of a princess, if you were the lineal descendant of Charlemagne, if your quarterings were as numerous as mine, which Saint Louis added to at the time of the Crusades? Ought you to hold me responsible for an advantage which is not of my own seeking?

"Yes, Jill, I feel that my life is henceforth inseparably bound up in yours, and you have got to love me, viscount though I be. I see your answer trembling on your lovely lips, but it shall not be spoken, for this kiss shall stifle it ere it be uttered.

"You are mine by the will of sacred nature, by the divine right of love, by your heart that throbs, by mine that beats high. Be you duchess or grisette, be I prince or peasant matters no longer. Here are only Psyche and Cupid kissing as they recognise each other."

"Let me go, Candale," sighed Jill, trying to escape from the Viscount's embrace. "Do not take advantage of my love for you."

"Fear nothing, sweet one. Rest against my breast, for that is your place; what can the Viscountess de Candale have to fear from her husband?"

"Heavens! what have you said?"

"I say that I am going to marry you, for there is no woman in the world, so far as I am concerned, but you."

"Oh! unexpected bliss!" said Jill, blushing and turning pale by turns. "Yet a bliss I may not accept. Think of it! What a derogation for you. You who bear one of the noblest names in France, marry a poor work-girl with her good character for sole dowry."

"Your virtue makes you the equal of a queen; and besides, no one, considering the manners and morals of these days of ours, can be sure of the kind of blood that flows in his veins. How do I know that you are not as noble as I am? Our princes are gallant enough to be called literally the fathers of their peoples."

"I beg you, Candale, to spare my mother's memory," said Mme. de Champrosé, who could not help smiling inwardly at the Viscount's suggestion, which was very much nearer the truth than he had any idea of. "And do not persist in a request that would mar your life."

"It will not mar it. I intend that we shall be so happy together that every one shall be madly envious of us."

"But how could I, a poor ignorant girl who know nothing of society or of life, how could I keep up my position in that brilliant circle, among all these great personages and haughty women, who will look down on me with lofty pride and make me feel that I am lowly born by their insulting glances and their disdainful smiles?"

"Every one will respect my wife, whom I shall present, her hand in mine."

"But do you not fear the jibes of the Court and the town?"

"To begin with, I fear nobody. I am young, rich, and my own master. Even if some old aristocrat, a stickler for ancient prejudices, should reproach me with what will be the wisest thing I shall ever have done, I shall have on my side M. de Voltaire, the Geneva citizen, Diderot, and the whole of the Encyclopædia clique, who will make the devil's own row over it and proclaim my marriage an action worthy of one of the Seven Sages of Greece. It will make me exceedingly popular. So you see, my dear Jill, that not

one of your objections is worth anything, and that ere long you will be the most fashionable woman and the most run after in all Paris.

"Now, will you or will you not give me the tips of these white fingers of yours, dainty as a marchioness's, and allow me to slip Jack's ring on one of them?"

Jill, feeling that further resistance might annoy and repel the Viscount, held out her finger for the engagement ring which Candale was offering her, blushing the while and casting down her eyes. Having accepted the ring, she threw her arms round her promised husband's neck with adorable tenderness.

The wedding day, which Candale desired, in his impatience, to be as early as possible, was settled upon, and the Viscount withdrew filled with joy and indulging in anticipations of happiness, not without having stolen a few kisses from the future husband's treasury.

Mme. de Champrosé did think for a moment of revealing her true name to Candale, once he had given her the engagement ring, but she determined to reserve it as a surprise for the ceremony of the signing of the marriage contract. Indescribable happiness filled her heart once she had acquired the certainty that she was loved for herself only, without a thought

of vanity, self-interest, or ambition, by one who was noble, rich, illustrious, who believed her to be a simple, poor, obscure daughter of the people, engaged in earning her living by lace-making, and who was nevertheless willing to make her the sharer of his rank and fortune. His love was to her a more brilliant coronet than that of a marchioness.

Jill's part had well-nigh drawn to an end, and Mme. de Champrosé, accompanied by Justina, returned to her residence in a post-chaise, with much clatter, to make sure her return should not pass unnoticed. The Abbé, Bafogne, the Chevalier, and the Commander lost no time in calling upon her, and the Marchioness explained that while on her way to Kerkaradec, she had felt so unwell that she had perforce to remain in bed for a few days in an inn room, and had returned to Paris instead of continuing on her way, in order to avail herself, in case of need, of the services of her trusty Bordeu.

The Marchioness's radiant and blooming appearance rather gave the lie to her story, but as it was unquestionably a plausible one, people had to accept it as true for there was no one who could rightfully assert it was made up.

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In the course of the next few days Mme. de Champrosé took care to show herself a good deal in public, in order to let everybody see that she was back in Paris

In the course of the next few days Mme. de Champrosé took care to show herself a good deal in public, in order to let everybody see that she was back in Paris. She made her appearance in her box at the Opera, and she went to Versailles, where she had an experience that very nearly disconcerted her.

She was descending the great steps of the Orangery just as Candale was coming up. On beholding this lady with her ample hoop-skirts, her feathers, her diamonds, and all the furbelows of full Court-dress, her hair powdered, her cheeks rouged heavily like a princess's, and a crowd of courtiers dancing attendance upon her, the Viscount was startled, for in the features of the Marchioness he made out a remarkable likeness to Jill's.

In spite of the difference in appearance and dress, the resemblance was so marvellous that he stopped short on the steps, stared at Mme. de Champrosé, and exclaimed:

"By Heavens! it is Jill!"

The Marchioness passed on and cast upon him an artlessly astonished glance, the glance of one who is surprised at an act the meaning of which is not apparent, and as Candale remained motionless, rooted to the

ground by amazement, she lightly went on her way, followed by the Commander de Livry and Bafogne, whom she took a wicked pleasure in causing to walk very fast, for Bafogne was very stout. And this piece of wickedness tickled her greatly.

"Nature does indulge in the strangest pranks," said Candale to himself as he proceeded up the steps, after the vision had vanished. "It amuses itself with casting two faces in the same mould, and making two copies of a marchioness or a grisette. How uncommonly alike they are! Only, Jill is prettier."

No, dear Viscount, Jill is not prettier, and you shall soon see that for yourself. Only, you are right, as a lover, to think your sweetheart the most beautiful woman on earth, more beautiful than herself. Faith alone saves, implicit faith; and a lover's faith is the right kind.

XXIV

IT will be remembered that the druggist left Jill deeply hurt at seeing his proposal to bestow his illustrious hand upon a young woman, who, no doubt, was very attractive, but who had not a penny to her name, rejected by her.

He sought for a way to avenge the slight put upon him, and as he was acquainted with the shopman, Justina's sweetheart, to whom the maid had been weak enough to tell the truth about Jill, Rougeron, pretending to desire to learn something about the girl, in whom he said he was interested, got everything out of him, learned that the supposed lace-maker was none else than the Marchioness de Champrosé, and determined to make good use of his discovery.

To this end he spread a report that the Marchioness, following the example of many ladies of high rank, weary of Court pleasures and the sickening attentions of worn-out courtiers, was in the habit of attracting young fellows to private retreats of her own, in which

she assumed different characters, in order to enjoy herself without running the risk of responsibility.

As will presently be seen, he did not stop here in his wickedness; but the star that watched over the fortunes of Jack and Jill, a name I must be permitted to give them once more, was so unmistakably a lucky one that every attempt to injure them turned in their favour.

The day on which Candale came to fetch Jill for the purpose of signing the marriage contract, a messenger opened the door and threw a letter on the table. The letter was addressed to Mr. Jack and contained the following words:

"Mr. Jack, — You had better take care; you have been trapped. You have no doubt heard of young fellows who were loved by great ladies who disguised themselves in order to find out whether the pleasures of the people were as agreeable as those of the Court, and whether they could get more tipsy in a wine-shop than at fashionable suppers. You must have heard of handsome fellows disappearing, either by being shut up in the oubliettes of some prison, or by being shipped on board a vessel bound for the colonies. Tremble! The lace-maker is a marchioness; Jill is Mme. de Champrosé! I need not say more to make you understand the fate that awaits you when this new Mme. d'Egmont's whim shall have been satisfied. If you are a man, you will seek to be

avenged for being tricked, and you will destroy her character, as she so fully deserves it should be. If you have not the pluck to do that, if you have been caught by her, blame no one but yourself for what will happen. You are warned!"

Viscount de Candale, whose whole thoughts were of his approaching happiness, and who had opened the letter carelessly — it was written on coarse wrapping-paper — was startled by the contents.

"What means this strange story?" he exclaimed in a changed voice.

"I see what it is," returned Jill, very quietly, as she glanced over the letter. "My maid has been babbling."

"Your maid! What do you mean? Is this true? Explain this mystery; I am on tenter-hooks."

"Jill's part is over and done with."

"You were playing a part, then?"

"I do not think Jack can scold Jill for that."

"So the letter tells the truth?"

"It does."

"You are the Marchioness de Champrosé?"

"I am, Viscount de Candale."

"You perfidious girl!"

"You deceitful man!"

"You tricked me."

"And but for Rosette, you would still be Jack."

"And did you mean to remain silent had this letter not let the cat out of the bag?"

"You would presently have learned my secret when I signed the marriage contract. Come, dear Candale, do not look so woe-begone. It is true that I am only a marchioness, but then, you see, every girl is not lucky enough to be born a grisette. Have I turned so very plain since I have ceased to be Jill?"

"No, indeed," passionately replied the Viscount as he kissed her hand.

"And the next time you meet me on the steps of the Orangery at Versailles, will you recognise me and bow to me?"

"It was you, then?"

"Of course it was."

"I might have known there could not be two Jills in this world."

"You flatterer."

"Well, what a strange series of adventures we have gone through."

"Secret sympathy guided both of us; but I hope you do not suppose that I am in the habit of indulging in this sort of escapade. For the matter of that, you

shall see for yourself," added Mme. de Champrosé, laughingly. "My story is yours over again. One evening, when I felt weary to death, the whim occurred to me to put on this disguise and to call myself Jill, and thus was I fortunate enough to win your love. In society, carried away as we should have been by fashion and frivolity, we might not have been able to know each other in the whirl of pleasure, and we should have passed each other by without ever learning to understand what we really were. Our disguises have enabled us to be true to ourselves. I, who have the reputation of being an affected and witty woman of fashion, am at heart a simple-minded and truthful girl, and care for nature only. You, in spite of your fame as a dandy and a lady-killer, are tender-hearted and straightforward. Let us keep these things to ourselves, and let us always be Jack and Jill to each other."

The wedding took place in the chapel of Champrosé House, and that evening, when the Abbé called to pay his respects to the Marchioness, he was surprised to find in the drawing-room a new face, which did not appear to bode well for the success of his love, the unknown being young, handsome, and superbly dressed.

In order to counterbalance the effect of the new-

comer's presence, the Abbé recited some verses he had composed, on which he relied greatly, and which were something to the following effect : —

> "Bound through the roses on a trip,
> Fluttering a butterfly did stray,
> Till it settled on the ruby lip
> Of the lovely de Champrosé."

"Stop, my dear poet," said the Marchioness, laughing. "I am sorry to have to spoil the symmetry of your lines, but I am no longer Mme. de Champrosé; I am now Viscountess de Candale, which does not rime so well, and I have the pleasure of presenting you to my husband."

The Commander, the financier, and the Chevalier soon learned the news and had to resign themselves to the fact as best they could. The Abbé alone remained inconsolable, for he could not manage to bring the name Candale into his lines.

Shortly afterwards Rosette received a big box full of Malines lace, accompanied by a bracelet set with diamonds of the largest size and the finest water. A little note was joined to the gifts, and contained these words : "From Jack and Jill."

The Thousand and Second Night

THE THOUSAND AND SECOND NIGHT

I HAD ordered that no one should be admitted, for early in the morning I had fully made up my mind to do nothing, and was determined not to be interrupted while so seriously engaged. Sure that no bore would trouble me (alas! all the bores are not confined within Molière's play) I had made the most careful arrangements to enjoy in comfort my favourite pleasure.

In the fireplace blazed a great fire; through the closed curtains a soft light entered; half a dozen cushions lay about on the carpet, and I myself, comfortably outstretched in front of the hearth, at about the distance that a roast on the spit is placed, I was twirling on my foot a big Morocco slipper, quaintly shaped and of an Eastern yellow colour. My glance, already yielding to the delightful somnolence that follows upon the voluntary suspension of thought, was wandering, while barely seeing, from the lovely sketch of "Magdalen in the Desert," by Camille

Roqueplan, to the stern pen and ink drawing by Aligny and the great landscape by the four Inseparables: Feuchères, Séchan, Diéterle, and Desplechins, which forms the crowning glory of my poet's home. The feeling of reality was little by little passing away, and I was sinking deep within the fathomless waters of the "Sea of Annihilation," in which so many Eastern dreamers have lost their reason, already shaken by opium and hascheech.

The room was plunged in the deepest silence. I had stopped the clock in order not to hear the ticking of the pendulum, the pulse-beat of eternity; for I cannot bear, when minded to be idle, the stupid, feverish activity of the brass disk that swings from one side to the other of its cage and ever goes on without ever progressing.

Suddenly ting-a-ling-a-ling! went the bell; sharp, shrill, unbearably silvery breaking in upon and shattering my peace like a drop of molten lead sizzling as it falls in a sleepy lake. Forgetful of my cat, curled up on my sleeve, I started up and sprang to my feet as if moved by a spring, cursing most heartily the fool of a porter who, in spite of strictest orders, had allowed some one to pass him by. Then I sat myself down

again, and scarcely having got over the nervous shock I replaced the cushions under my arms and with a bold front awaited the encounter.

The drawing-room door was partly opened and the first thing I saw was the woolly head of Adolfo Francesco Pergialla, a sort of Abyssinian brigand in whose service I was at that time, under the belief that I had secured a negro servant. His eyes were shining in a ring of white, his broad nose was greatly dilated, and his thick lips, parted by a vast grin which he tried to make sly, showed teeth large as a Newfoundland's. He was evidently bursting with the desire to speak, and indulged in all manner of contortions in order to attract my attention.

"Well, Francesco, what is the matter? I shall not be the wiser if you go on rolling your enamel eyes for an hour like the negro with a clock in his stomach. Enough of your pantomime; try to tell me, in any language you please, what has happened, and who is the person that hunts me out in the privacy of my idlesse."

I ought to tell you that Adolfo Francesco Pergialla Abdallah Ben Mohammed, an Abyssinian by birth, formerly a Mohammedan, and a Christian for the

nonce, was acquainted with every language under the sun and spoke not a single one intelligibly. He would begin in French, go on with Italian, and finish with Turkish or Arabic; this being particularly the case when the conversation assumed a turn unpleasant to him, in the shape of inquiries concerning vanished bottles of claret and liqueurs, or boxes of sweets that were no more before their time. Fortunately I have polyglot friends, so we first drove him out of Europe, and when he had exhausted Italian, Spanish, and German, he fled to Constantinople, to Turkish, whither he was chased hot-foot by Alfred. Seeing himself on the point of being caught, he would make a leap over into Algiers, where Eugene trod on his heels through all the dialects of High and Low Arabic. At this point he would take refuge in Bambara, Galla, and other dialects of Central Africa, among which Combes and Tamisier alone could bring him to bay. This time, however, he replied resolutely in indifferent, but readily intelligible Spanish: —

"*Una mujer muy bonita con su hermana quien quiere hablar á usted.*"

"Show them in if they are young and pretty; if they are not, say that I am engaged."

The rascal, who knew a pretty woman when he saw one, vanished for a moment and soon returned followed by two women wrapped from head to foot in great white burnouses, the hoods of which were pulled down.

In the most gallant manner I could muster I offered these ladies a couple of arm-chairs, but when they saw the piles of cushions they thanked me with a wave of the hand, and, throwing off their burnouses, sat down cross-legged after the Oriental fashion.

The one who was opposite to me, exactly in the ray of sunshine that came in between the curtains, might have been about twenty; the other, much less pretty, seemed to be older. I shall not trouble myself with her, but keep to the pretty one.

She was richly dressed in the Turkish mode; her jimp waist was set off by a richly ornamented green velvet vest; a striped gauze chemisette, cut in a way to allow her shapely white bosom to be seen, was fastened at the neck with two diamond studs; a white satin sash, spangled and starred, was bound round her waist. She wore full trousers that came down to her knees; Albanian leggings of embroidered velvet covered her slender, lissome limbs down to the pretty bare feet shod in little slippers of goffered morocco leather, stitched,

coloured, and embroidered with gold threads; an orange caftan, with a pattern of flowers in silver, and a scarlet fez with a long silk tuft, completed a toilet that was assuredly an uncommon one to wear while paying visits in Paris in this unhappy year 1842.

Her features had all the regularity of the Turkish race; her complexion was of a mat white, like unpolished marble, and under the long henna-tinted lids shone deep and clear her glorious Eastern eyes. She looked at me with an anxious air and seemed troubled about something. By way of trying to appear at her ease, she was holding her foot with one hand, while with the other she toyed with the end of one of her tresses, laden with sequins with a hole pierced in the centre, with ribbons and strings of pearls.

The other lady, who was dressed much in the same way, though less richly, also remained silent and motionless. Remembering the arrival of the bayaderes in Paris, I supposed she must be an Almeh from Cairo, or some Egyptian acquaintance of my friend Dauzat, who, emboldened by my reception of the beauteous Amany and her dark-skinned companions, Sandiroun and Rangoun, had called to beg for my influence as a newspaper man.

"What can I do for you, ladies?" said I, performing quite a satisfactory salamalec by putting my hands to my ears.

The beautiful Turkish lady raised her eyes to the ceiling, cast them down to the ground, and looked inquiringly at her sister. She did not understand a word of French.

"Here, you Francesco! Here, you rascal, you lout, you ass! Here, you misshapen baboon! Come and be of some use for once in your life."

Francesco approached with a look of great solemnity and importance.

"As you speak French so badly, I assume that you speak Arabic very well. You shall act as dragoman to these ladies and myself; I promote you to the dignity of interpreter. Begin by asking these two beautiful strangers who they are, whence they come, and what they want."

I need not reproduce the variety of faces made by the aforesaid Francesco, and I shall relate the conversation as if it had taken place in French.

"Sir," said the beautiful Oriental through the intermediary of the negro, "although you are a writer, you must have read 'The Thousand and One Nights,' Arab

tales translated, after a fashion, by dear M. Galland, and it may be that the name of Scheherazade is not wholly unknown to you."

"The lovely Scheherazade, the spouse of that ingenious Sultan Schahariar, who, to avoid being betrayed, wedded a wife in the evening and had her beheaded the next morning? I know her very well indeed."

"Well, I am the Sultana Scheherazade, and this is my dear sister Dinarzade, who never once failed to say to me at night: 'Sister, before day comes, tell us, if you are not asleep, one of those fine stories you know.'"

"I am delighted to see you, startling as your visit is. But may I ask to what a poor poet like myself owes the honour of receiving the Sultana Scheherazade and her sister Dinarzade?"

"By dint of relating stories, I have exhausted my stock; I have told every one of them; I have exhausted fairyland; ghouls, djinns, magicians, and witches have been of the greatest use to me, but everything gives out, even the impossible. The most glorious Sultan, Shadow of the Padisha, Light of Light, Sun and Moon of the Middle Empire, is beginning to yawn terribly and to clutch at the handle of his sabre.

My last story was told this morning, and my sublime lord and master has deigned not to have me beheaded yet. By making use of the magic carpet of the four Facardins, I hurried hither to find a tale, a story, or a romance, for to-morrow morning, when my sister Dinarzade calls upon me, as is her custom, I must have something to relate to the great Schahariar, the arbiter of my fate. That fool Galland deceived the world when he said that after the thousand and first night the Sultan, sick of stories, had granted me my life. It is not true; the man is thirsting for stories more than he ever did, and his curiosity alone acts as a check upon his cruelty."

"My poor Scheherazade, your Sultan is uncommonly like our public. If we writers omit to amuse it for but a single day, it does not cut off our heads, it is true, but it forgets all about us, which is scarcely less ferocious. I am sorry for you, but I do not see how I can help you."

"Surely you have a tale or a story ready written. Give it to me."

"What a request to make! charming Sultana. I have nothing ready, for I work only when driven to it by hunger, for, as Persius remarks, *fames facit poetridas*

picas. I have enough to pay for my dinner for the next three days. You had better go to Alphonse Karr, if you can manage to reach him through the swarms of wasps that flutter and beat their wings round his door and against his windows. He has a heart full of delightful love stories, which he will tell you in the interval between a boxing lesson and a performance on the hunting-horn. Or wait for Jules Janin at the corner of a newspaper article, and as you go he will improvise for you a story such as Sultan Schahariar never yet heard."

Poor Scheherazade raised her long, henna-tinted eyelids to the ceiling with a look that was so sweet, so lustrous, so moving, so suppliant, that I was overcome, and made a great effort.

"I did have a sort of subject that I proposed to work off in the paper. I shall dictate it to you; you shall translate it into Arabic and add to it the ornaments, flowers, and pearls of poesy it lacks. As for the title, it is ready to our hand; we shall call our tale 'The Thousand and Second Night.'"

Scheherazade took a sheet of paper and began writing from right to left, in the Eastern fashion, with great rapidity. She had no time to lose, having to be back

that same evening in the capital of the kingdom of Samarcand.

There once lived in the city of Cairo a young fellow called Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, who lived on Ezbekieh Square.

His father and mother had died a few years before, leaving him a small fortune, which, however, enabled him to live without working with his hands. Other men would have tried to freight a vessel with merchandise, or to send a few camels laden with precious stuffs to join the caravan that goes from Bagdad to Mecca. But Mahmoud preferred to lead a quiet life, smoking tombeki in his narghile, drinking sherbet, and eating dried Damascus preserves.

Although he was a handsome young fellow, with regular features and an agreeable expression, he never went in search of love adventures, and he had several times replied to people who urged him to marry and proposed to him rich and suitable matches, that it was not yet time for him to do so and that he was in no way minded to wed.

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed had received a good education; he could read the oldest books with ease, wrote a

fine hand, knew the verses of the Koran by heart, and could have recited, without making a single mistake, the Mollakhats of the famous poets posted on the doors of the mosques. He was himself a bit of a poet, and frequently wrote verses, rimed or in assonance, which he chanted to airs of his own composition with much grace and charm.

By dint of smoking his narghile and dreaming away in the cool of the evening on the marble flagging of his terrace, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed's imagination became inflamed, and he planned to become the lover of a Peri or at least of a princess of the blood royal. This was the secret reason why he received so indifferently the various proposals of marriage that were made to him, and the offers of slave-dealers. The only company he could bear with was that of his cousin Abdul Melek, a gentle, timid young fellow, who apparently shared his own modest tastes.

One day Mahmoud Ben Ahmed was on his way to the Bazar to purchase a few vials of attargul and other Constantinople essences he happened to be in need of. In a very narrow street he met a litter closed with flame-coloured velvet curtains, carried by two white mules, and preceded by richly dressed zebecks and

sayces. He drew up against the wall to allow the litter and its suite to pass by, but quick as he was, he still had time to catch a glimpse, through the parting of the curtains, blown aside by a chance puff of wind, of a very beautiful lady seated upon cushions of gold brocade. The lady, trusting to the thickness of the curtains and believing herself safe from any rash glance, had raised her veil on account of the heat. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed caught but the merest glimpse of her; it was enough, however, to turn his head. The lady had a dazzlingly fair complexion, eyebrows that seemed to have been drawn with a brush, a pomegranate mouth that, as it opened, revealed a double row of Orient pearls finer and more limpid than those that compose the bracelets and necklace of the favourite sultana, a proud and engaging air, and a something noble and royal about her appearance.

Dazzled by the sight of such perfection, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed remained for a long time rooted to the spot, and, wholly forgetful of the fact that he had left home with the intention of making purchases, he returned empty-handed, his heart full of the radiant vision he had beheld.

All night long he dreamed of the fair unknown, and

as soon as he rose he proceeded to compose a long poem in her honour, lavishing upon her the most flowery and the most amorous comparisons.

As he did not know what to do with himself, once he had finished his verses and copied them upon a handsome piece of papyrus, with rich capitals in red and gilded ornaments, he put the poem into his sleeve, and went out in order to show it to his friend Abdul, from whom he had no secrets.

On his way to Abdul's house, he passed by the Bazar and entered the perfume dealer's shop for the purpose of purchasing the vials of attargul. He found there a beautiful lady wrapped up in a long white veil so that her left eye only was visible. That single left eye was sufficient for Mahmoud Ben Ahmed to at once recognise the beauty he had seen in the palanquin. He was filled with such emotion that he was compelled to lean against the wall.

The lady with the veil clearly perceived his agitation, and very kindly inquired what was the matter with him and whether he felt ill.

The dealer, the lady, and Mahmoud went into the back-shop; a negro boy brought on a tray a glass of snow water which Mahmoud drank.

"How came you to be so agitated when you saw me?" asked the lady, in a very sweet voice and with an accent that betrayed tender interest.

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed told her how he had caught sight of her near the Hassan Mosque, at the moment when the curtains of her litter had parted slightly, and that ever since then he had been desperately in love with her.

"Indeed?" said the lady. "Was your love of such rapid growth? I did not suppose it could spring up so suddenly. I am the woman you met yesterday; I was on my way to the bath in my litter, and as the heat was suffocating I had raised my veil. But you did not see me properly; I am not as beautiful as you say."

Thereupon she drew aside her veil and revealed a face so perfectly and radiantly beautiful that envy itself could have found no flaw in it.

It is easy to imagine Mahmoud's delight on receiving such a favour. He gushed out in compliments that had at least the rare merit of being sincere and in no wise exaggerated. As he spoke with much fire and vehemence, the paper on which he had transcribed his verses fell from his sleeve and rolled to the floor.

"What is that paper?" said the lady. "The writ-

ing seems to be very beautiful and betrays a practised hand."

"It is," replied the young man, blushing mightily, "a poem I composed last night, as I could not sleep. I tried to relate your perfections in it, but the copy is a long way from the original, and my lines have not the splendour needed to celebrate the glory of your eyes."

The lady read the lines attentively, and as she put them in her sash, said —

"They are really not at all bad, although they are full of flattery."

Then she drew her veil around her and left the shop, not before remarking, in a tone that went to Mahmoud Ben Ahmed's heart: —

"I sometimes come, on my way back from the baths, to purchase essences and boxes of perfumery at Bedreddin's."

The dealer congratulated Mahmoud Ben Ahmed upon his good fortune, and taking him to the very back of the shop, he whispered in his ear: —

"That lady is none other than Princess Ayesha, the Caliph's daughter."

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed returned home fairly dazed by his good luck and scarcely venturing to believe in it.

Nevertheless, modest though he was, he could not deny that Princess Ayesha had looked favourably upon him. Chance, which plays so willingly the part of a go-between, had far surpassed his wildest hopes. He rejoiced that he had not yielded to the solicitations of his friends when they urged him to marry, and that he had not been carried away by the seductive portraits of marriageable girls drawn by the old women; for girls, as every one knows, have always gazelle eyes, moon-like faces, hair longer than the tail of Al Borak, the Prophet's mare, mouths of red jasper, breath scented like ambergris, and innumerable other perfections that vanish when fall away the haick and the bridal veil. Happy, indeed, did Mahmoud feel at being unentangled in any ordinary bonds, and free to give himself up wholly to his new love.

He turned and tossed on his divan, but could not fall asleep: the dazzling image of Princess Ayesha passed and repassed in front of his eyes like a flame-coloured bird against a sunset sky. Unable to rest, he ascended into one of the marvellously traceried cedar-wood look-outs which, in Eastern cities, are perched on the outer walls of houses, for the purpose of catching the coolness and the current of air that always blows down a

street. Sleep still avoided him, for sleep is like happiness, and flees when sought. In order, then, to quiet his nerves by the spectacle of a serene night, he went up, carrying his narghile with him, to the topmost terrace of his house.

The cool air of night, the splendour of the heavens all inlaid with patines of bright gold and more gorgeous than a Peri's robe, the moon showing its silver face, like a love-sick sultana bending from her trellised kiosk, refreshed Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, for he was a poet and could not be insensible to the magnificent sight displayed before him.

From the height at which he stood the city of Cairo was outspread at his feet as on one of those plans in relief which Giaours make of their fortified cities. The terraces, adorned with thick-leaved plants and striped carpets; the squares, on which shimmered the waters of the Nile, for it was flood-time; the gardens with upspringing palms and clumps of carob and nopal trees; the groups of houses cut by narrow streets; the tinned domes of the mosques; the slender minarets, traceried like ivory toys; the dark or illumined corners of the palaces, — combined to form a picture wondrously adapted to delight the eye. In the

distance the ashy sands of the plain mingled their hues with those of the milky sky, and the three pyramids of Ghizeh, faintly seen in the bluish light, rose like giant stone triangles upon the edge of the horizon.

Seated on a pile of cushions and the elastic tube of his narghile wound round his body, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed tried to make out through the transparent darkness the distant outline of the palace wherein slept the beauteous Ayesha. Deep silence reigned over the scene, and it might have been mistaken for a painted view, for no breath, no whisper told of the presence of any human being. The only sound audible was the gurgling of the smoke in Mahmoud Ben Ahmed's narghile as it came through the rock-crystal globe, filled with cold water intended to cool its white puffs. Suddenly a shrill cry broke the stillness, a cry of dread distress, such as utters by the spring, the antelope that feels the lion's paw upon its neck or its head in a crocodile's mouth. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, terrified by that despairing shriek, rose at a bound and instinctively laid his hand on the pommel of his yataghan, which he worked in its sheath to make sure it would draw out freely. Then he bent in the direction from which the sound appeared to have come.

He managed to distinguish afar off in the darkness a strange and mysterious group, composed of a white shape pursued by a pack of dark, grim, monstrous figures, gesticulating wildly and running helter-skelter. The white form seemed to flit over the tops of the houses, and the distance separating it from its pursuers was so small that it was to be feared it must soon be caught if the chase lasted much longer and no one came to its aid. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed at first thought it must be a Peri hunted by long-fanged, flesh-eating ghouls, or by djinns with flaccid, membraneous wings, with claws like the wings of bats. He therefore drew from his pocket his comboloio of striated aloe-beads and began to recite, by way of protection, Allah's ninety-nine names. But he stopped ere he got to the twentieth. It was no Peri, no supernatural being fleeing and springing from one terrace to the other, leaping across the four and five foot wide streets that cut the compact blocks of houses in Oriental cities, but a woman, and the djinns were merely zebecks, sayces, and eunuchs hunting her down.

There were still two or three terraces and a street between Mahmoud Ben Ahmed on his platform and the fugitive, but her strength seemed to fail her. She

looked round in anguish, and, like a tired-out horse spurred on to a last effort, when she saw the hideous group of her pursuers so close to her, she placed the street between her foes and herself by a desperate leap.

As she sprang on to the terrace she brushed by Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, whom she did not see, for the moon was veiled with clouds, and ran to the end of the terrace that looked out upon a second street broader than the other. Hopeless of leaping across, she gazed round as if in search of a hiding-place, and catching sight of a great marble vase, she concealed herself within it like a genie re-entering the calyx of a lily.

The maddened crew invaded the terrace with the impetuosity of fiends. Brave though Mahmoud Ben Ahmed was and skilful in the use of his weapons, he could not repress a feeling of terror at the sight of their copper-coloured or black faces with long mustaches or hideously hairless, their glittering eyes, their hands clutching swords and kandjars, and their whole low, ferocious features distorted by fury. They rapidly examined the deserted terrace, and not seeing the fugitive, concluded she must have leaped across the street. They therefore went on their way after her without paying further attention to Mahmoud Ben Ahmed.

When the sound of the clanking of their weapons and the shuffling of their slippers over the stone terraces had died away in the distance, the fugitive gradually raised her pretty, frightened face above the edge of the vase, looked round like a startled antelope, then straightened herself up, and stood, a lovely pistil in the great marble flower. Seeing no one but Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, who was smiling at her and signing that she had nothing to fear, she sprang out of the vase and advanced towards the young man with outstretched arms and in a suppliant attitude.

"I beseech you to have pity on me and to save me, my lord; hide me in the darkest corner of your home and protect me against the fiends who are pursuing me."

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed took her by the hand, led her to the terrace-stair, closed the trap-door carefully, and conducted her to his room. When he had lighted the lamp, he saw, what he had already guessed by the silvery tones of her voice, that the girl was young, and also very pretty, whereat he was in no wise surprised, for he had noticed, even in the starlight, that she had a very fine figure. She appeared to be not more than fifteen. Her extreme pallor caused her great almond-shaped black eyes to shine out; her thin, delicate nose im-

parted great nobility to her profile, worthy of being envied by the fairest maids of Chios or Cyprus, and of rivalling with the beauty of the marble of which were formed the idols adored by the old Greek pagans. Her neck was of perfect shape and of a most lovely white; save that on the nape of the neck there was a red line, no larger than a hair or a silk thread, from which issued small drops of blood. Her dress was simple, and consisted of a silk embroidered jacket, muslin trousers, and a striped sash. Her bosom rose and fell under her rayed gauze tunic, for she was yet out of breath and had scarcely got over her terror.

When she had rested for some time and had regained her composure, she knelt down before Mahmoud Ben Ahmed and told him her story in very good language: —

"I was a slave in the harem of the rich Abu Bekker, and was foolish enough to hand to his favourite wife a selam, or flower letter, sent by a most handsome young emir with whom she had a love affair. Abu Bekker, having discovered the selam, became furiously angry, caused his favourite wife to be sewn up in a leather bag with a couple of cats, and thrown into the river, and ordered that I should be beheaded. The kislar-agassi was charged with the execution of the sentence, but

profiting by the terror and disorder caused in the harem by the terrible punishment inflicted upon poor Nourmahal, and finding the terrace trap-door open, I took to flight. My escape was soon observed, and ere long the black eunuchs, zebecks, and Albanians in my master's service started in pursuit. One of them, Mesrour, whose attentions I have always repelled, got so close to me with his brandished sword that he barely missed me. Indeed, I felt the edge of his sword graze my skin, and it was then I uttered the terrible cry you must have heard, for I own I thought my last hour had come. But God is God, and Mahomet is His prophet; the angel Azrael was not yet ready to bear me away to the bridge of Al Sirat.

"Now I have no hope save in you. Abu Bekker is powerful; he will have me sought out, and if he can catch me, Mesrour's aim will be truer, for he would not be satisfied with merely grazing my neck with his blade," said she with a smile, as she passed her hand upon the faint line made by the zebeck's weapon. "Accept me as your slave; I shall devote to you the life you have saved; my shoulder will always be ready for you to rest your head upon, and my hair to wipe away the dust from your sandals."

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, like all men who have studied letters and poetry, was very kind-hearted. Leilah, such was the fugitive slave's name, spoke in choice language; she was also young and beautiful, but even had not this been the case, humanity would not have allowed him to send her away. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed pointed out to the young slave a Persian carpet and a pile of silk cushions in a corner of the room, and on the step of the platform a collation of dates, candied limes, and Constantinople rose preserves, which he had left untouched, absorbed as he was in his thoughts. There were also two water-coolers, of porous Thebes clay, placed in Japanese saucers and covered with dewy pearls. Having thus installed Leilah temporarily, he went back to the terrace to finish his smoke and to find the last assonance he needed for the ghazel he was composing in honour of Princess Ayesha, a ghazel in which the lilies of Iran, the flowers of Gulistan, the stars and all the constellations of heaven were contending for the pride of place.

The next day, at dawn, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed reflected that he had not a single sachet of benzoin, that he was out of civet, and that the silk and gold brocade bag embroidered with spangles, in which he

kept his latakieh, was worn out and ought to be replaced by a new one, handsomer and in better taste. He scarcely gave himself time to perform his ablutions and to say his prayer with his face turned to the east. Then he issued forth from his house after having copied the verses and put them in his sleeve, as he had done the first time, but not with the intention of showing them to his friend Abdul. He proposed to hand them to Princess Ayesha in person, in the event of his meeting her in the Bazar, in Bedreddin's shop.

The muezzin, bending over the rail of the minaret balcony, called out the hour: it was the fifth. In the streets were to be met with fellahs only, driving before them asses laden with watermelons, bunches of dates, fowls tied by the legs, and halves of sheep that they were carrying to market. Mahmoud went into the quarter inhabited by Ayesha, but saw whitewashed crenellated walls only. No one showed at the three or four narrow windows guarded by close wooden trellised gratings, through which the inhabitants of the dwelling could plainly enough see what was going on in the street, but which proved a complete bar to indiscreet glances and inquisitive people outside. Unlike Feringhee palaces, those of the East reserve all their

splendour for the interior, and, as it were, turn their backs upon passers-by. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, therefore, did not reap any great benefits from his investigation. He saw coming in and going out two or three black slaves, in rich costumes and with the haughty and insolent look that betokened the consciousness of being servitors in a great house owned by a man of the highest rank.

Mahmoud in vain endeavoured to ascertain, by gazing upon the thick walls, the whereabouts of Ayesha's apartments. The great gate, with its horse-shoe arch, was almost wholly walled up, access being had to the inner court by a side door, so that it was impossible to look in. He was therefore obliged to withdraw without having made any discovery, for it was getting late and he might have attracted attention. He therefore repaired to Bedreddin's shop, and in order to gain his good-will, bought freely of things that he had not the least need of. He sat down in the shop, questioned the dealer, inquired about the state of business, asked whether he had sold profitably the silks and carpets brought by the last caravan from Aleppo, whether his vessels had reached port in safety, in a word, indulged in all the base subterfuges common

among lovers, in the hope, of course, of seeing Ayesha appear at any moment; his expectation proved vain; she did not turn up that day. He went home with a heavy heart, calling her already perfidious and cruel, as if she had pledged herself to be at Bedreddin's and had broken her word.

On returning to his room, he took off his slippers which he laid in the carved marble niche intended for them, cut by the side of the door; he removed the caftan of rich stuff he had put on with the object of setting off his good looks and appearing at his best before Ayesha, and then sank on his divan in a state of distress akin to despair. Everything seemed to be lost, so far as he was concerned; the world was coming to an end, and he bitterly reviled fate; and all this simply because he had not, as he hoped to do, met a woman he had never known until a couple of days before.

He had closed the eyes of the body in order to see more clearly the dream of his soul, when he felt a light air cooling his brow. He raised his eyelids and perceived Leilah seated on the ground near him and fanning him with one of the palm-leaf fans used in the East to fan one's self and also to drive away flies. He had clean forgotten her.

"What troubles my dear lord?" said she in a voice as pearly and melodious as the sweetest music. "My lord does not seem to be at ease in his mind; some care weighs upon him. If my lord's slave could dispel the cloud of sadness that darkens his brow, she would deem herself the most fortunate of women, and would not envy Princess Ayesha herself, beautiful and wealthy though she be."

At the name Mahmoud Ben Ahmed started on his divan like a wounded man whose wound has been touched unwittingly. He raised himself up partially, and looked inquisitively at Leilah, whose expression was quite calm and filled only with tender solicitude. Nevertheless he blushed as if the secret of his love had been guessed by her. Leilah appeared not to notice the tell-tale flush and continued her endeavours to console her new master.

"What can my lord's handmaid do to drive away the sombre thoughts that oppress his mind? Music might perchance dispel his melancholy. An old slave, who had been one of the Sultan's odalisques, taught me the secrets of composition. I can improvise verses and accompany myself on the guzla."

As she spoke, she took down from the wall a guzla,

the body of which was of citron wood, ribbed with ivory, and the neck inlaid with ebony and mother-of-pearl. She began by playing with marvellous skill the tarabuca and other Arab airs.

At any other time the beauty of her voice and the sweetness of the music would have delighted Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, who was keenly sensitive to the charm of poetry and harmony, but his heart and mind were so filled with the lady he had seen at Bedreddin's that he paid no attention to Leilah's songs.

On the morrow he was more fortunate, and met Ayesha in Bedreddin's shop. It is out of the question to attempt to paint his delight; those alone who have been lovers themselves can understand it. He remained for a time voiceless, breathless, sightless. Ayesha, who observed his emotion, was pleased with it and spoke to him with much affability, for nothing tickles people of high rank more than to see the effect they produce in this way. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, recovering himself, did his utmost to be agreeable, and being young, good-looking, and having studied poetry and the art of expressing himself in elegant language, he fancied he was making a not unpleasant impression, and became bold enough to ask the Princess to allow him to see her in

some more favourable and less dangerous place than Bedreddin's shop.

"I am well aware," said he, "that I am fit only to be as the dust under the soles of your feet, that the distance between you and me could not be traversed in a thousand years by a horse of the Prophet's breed going at full speed, but love emboldens man, and the caterpillar that adores the rose cannot help confessing its passion."

Ayesha heard him to the end without manifesting the least displeasure. Fixing upon him a glance full of languor, she answered: —

"Be to-morrow, at the hour of prayer, under the third lamp in the Sultan Hassan Mosque. You will find there a black slave dressed in yellow damask. He will lead: do you follow him."

Then she drew her veil about her face and retired.

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed did not fail to keep the appointment, and placed himself under the third lamp, without daring to move away from it lest he should not be found by the black slave, who was not yet at his post. It is true that Mahmoud Ben Ahmed had arrived two hours before the time named. At last he saw the negro dressed in yellow damask coming straight

to the pillar against which he was leaning. The slave looked at him attentively and quietly signed to him to follow. They left the mosque together; the negro walked fast and led Mahmoud Ben Ahmed through endless twistings and turnings through the complicated maze of the streets of Cairo. The young fellow tried to make him speak once, but the guide, opening his vast mouth, well furnished with sharp white teeth, made him observe that his tongue had been cut out at the roots. It would have been difficult for him, therefore, to blab.

They at last reached a quarter of the city that was wholly deserted, and with which Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, though he had been born and brought up in Cairo, and believed he knew every hole and corner of it, was quite unacquainted. The mute stopped in front of a whitewashed wall, in which there was no trace of an opening. He measured six steps from the angle of the wall and looked carefully for a spring that was no doubt concealed between the joints of the stones. He found it and pressed it; a pillar turned on itself, and revealed a dark, narrow passage, into which the mute entered, followed by Mahmoud Ben Ahmed. They first went down more than one hundred steps, and next

proceeded along an obscure passage of interminable length. By feeling along the walls Mahmoud Ben Ahmed made out that they were cut out of the living rock and covered with engraved hieroglyphs. He understood that they were in the subterranean corridors of an ancient Egyptian necropolis, which had been utilised for the purpose of making this secret passage. At the end of the corridor, at a very great distance, glimmered a faint blue light. The light came through the traceried sculpture of a hall to which the passage led.

The mute touched another spring, and Mahmoud Ben Ahmed found himself in a hall paved with white marble, with a basin and jet of water in the centre, alabaster pillars, walls covered with glass mosaics, verses of the Koran interlaced with flowers and ornaments, and covered with a vaulting that was carved, wrought, and ornamented like the interior of a hive or of a stalactite grotto. Huge scarlet peonies placed in enormous Moorish vases of blue and white porcelain completed the decoration. On a platform, furnished with cushions, and set in a sort of niche in the thickness of the wall, sat Princess Ayesha, unveiled, radiant, and of a loveliness surpassing that of the houris of the fourth heaven.

"Well, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, have you written any more verse in my honour?" said she, in the most gracious manner, as she signed to him to be seated.

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed threw himself at Ayesha's knees, drew his papyrus from his sleeve, and read his ghazel in the most passionate tone. It was really a very fine piece of poetry. While he was reading the Princess's cheeks brightened and flushed up like an alabaster lamp that has just been lighted. Her eyes shone like stars; her glance flashed with extraordinary brilliancy; her body became translucent, and on her shoulders fluttered faint butterfly wings. Unfortunately Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, engrossed by the reading of his verses, did not look up and remained unaware of the transformation that was going on before him. When he finished, there was only Princess Ayesha looking at him with an ironical smile. Like all poets who are too much taken up with their own works, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed had forgotten that the finest verses are not worth as much as a single word from the heart, as a single look filled with the light of love. Peris are like women: one must guess what they are, and grasp them just as they are about to go back into heaven never again to come down. Opportunity must

be caught by the lock on its forehead, and the spirits of the air by their wings, for thus alone can they be mastered.

"Really, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, you are a rarely talented poet, and your verses deserve to be hung on the doors of mosques, written in letters of gold, by the side of the most celebrated works of Firdousi, Saadi, and Ibn Ben Omaz. It is a pity that you were so taken up with the alliteration of your lines that you did not look at me just now. You would have seen — well, you would have seen something. Your dearest desire was fulfilled in your presence without your perceiving it. Farewell Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, you who were resolved to love none but a Peri."

And Ayesha rose very majestically, raised a gold brocaded portière, and vanished.

The mute came for Mahmoud Ben Ahmed and led him back by the way they had come to the same place where he had met him. Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, annoyed and grieved at the way he had been dismissed, did not know what to make of it, and racked his brain in vain to find a motive for the Princess's abrupt departure. He came to the conclusion that it was merely due to a womanish whim, a passing fancy; but he went

in vain to Bedreddin's to buy benzoin and civet skins; he never again met Princess Ayesha. He repaired time after time to the third pillar in the Sultan Hassan Mosque, but nevermore did he see the negro dressed in yellow damask; and the end of it was that he fell a prey to the blackest melancholy.

Leilah tried innumerable ingenious ways of diverting him; she played to him on the guzla, told him wonderful stories, filled his room with odoriferous bouquets in which the diverse hues of flowers were so happily combined as to delight the eye as well as the sense of smell. Sometimes also she would dance before him with grace as supple as the cleverest Almeh. Any one else than Mahmoud Ben Ahmed would have been touched with so much thoughtfulness and attention, but his thoughts were elsewhere and the desire to find Ayesha again left him no rest. He often wandered round her palace, but never did he manage to get even a glimpse of her; no one appeared behind the carefully closed trellis, and the palace remained tomb-like.

His friend Abdul Malek, alarmed at his condition, often visited him; he could not help noting the grace and beauty of Leilah, which equalled, if they did not surpass, the charms of Princess Ayesha, and he won-

dered at Mahmoud Ben Ahmed's blindness. Had he not feared to violate the sacred laws of friendship, he would willingly have taken the young slave to wife.

Meanwhile, Leilah, though her beauty was in no wise diminished, became paler every day; her great eyes became more languid, and the flush of dawn on her cheeks was replaced by the pallor of moonlight. One day Mahmoud Ben Ahmed perceived that she had been weeping, and asked her the reason.

"I should never dare tell my dear lord. I am but a poor slave whom you took in out of pity, and I love you. But what am I in your eyes? I know that you vowed to love none but a Peri or a Sultana. Other men would be satisfied with the devotion of a young and tender heart, and would not trouble about the Caliph's daughter or the Queen of the Genii. Let your glance rest on me. I was fifteen yesterday; it may be that I am as beautiful as that Ayesha of whom you speak aloud in your dreams. It is true that neither the magic carbuncle nor the heron aigrette gleams on my forehead; that I do not go about escorted by soldiers carrying muskets inlaid with silver and coral; yet I can sing, I can improvise on the guzla, I dance like

Emineh's self, I am like a devoted sister to you, and withal I cannot touch your heart."

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed felt his heart moved as he listened to Leilah, but he spoke no word and seemed a prey to deepest melancholy. Two contending resolves struggled in his mind. On the one hand he found it hard to part with his favourite dream; on the other he said to himself that he was a fool to go on caring for a woman who had tricked him and left him with ironical speech; the more so that he had within his own home at least the equivalent of the youth and beauty of her whom he had lost.

Leilah was on her knees, as if awaiting the decision of her fate, and two tears rolled silently down the poor girl's pale cheeks.

"Why did not Mesrour's sword complete what it began?" she said, putting her hand to her fair, slender neck.

Touched by the gentleness of her accent, Mahmoud Ben Ahmed raised up the young girl and kissed her on her brow.

Leilah looked up with the gesture of a dove that is being fondled, and standing before Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, took his hands and said to him: —

"Look at me very carefully; does it not strike you that I am very like some one whom you know?"

Mahmoud Ben Ahmed could not restrain a cry of surprise.

"You have the very face, the very eyes, the very features, in a word, of Princess Ayesha. How comes it that I did not sooner notice the likeness?"

"Until now you cast but a careless glance upon your poor slave," replied Leilah, in a tone of gentle reproach.

"If Princess Ayesha in person were to send me now her negro in his yellow damask robe, with the selam of love, I would refuse to accompany him."

"Do you mean it?" said Leilah, in a voice that was more melodious than that of Bulbul owning its love to the rose. "You ought not, however, to despise beyond measure poor Ayesha, who is so like me."

For sole reply Mahmoud Ben Ahmed pressed the young slave to his heart. Great was his surprise when he saw Leilah's face light up, the magic carbuncle gleam on her brow, and wings, spotted with eyes like those of peacocks, unfold upon her lovely shoulders. Leilah was a Peri!

"My beloved Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, I am neither Princess Ayesha nor Leilah the slave; my real name is

Boudroulboudour. I am a Peri of the first order, as you may see from my carbuncle and my wings. One evening, when I was flying through the air, I heard you express the wish to be loved by a Peri. I was pleased with your ambition; mortals who are ignorant, coarse, and given up to earthly lusts, do not hanker after such exquisite bliss. I sought to try you, and assumed the disguises of Ayesha and Leilah to ascertain whether you would know me and love me in a human form. Your heart has proved more clear-sighted than your brain, and you have shown more kindness than pride; the slave's devotion caused you to prefer her to the Sultana. That was my crucial test. For one moment I was carried away by the beauty of your verse, and on the point of betraying myself. I feared, however, that you might prove to be merely a poet in love with his own imaginings and his own rimes, and I therefore withdrew, affecting haughty disdain. You proposed to marry Leilah the slave; Boudroulboudour the Peri will take her place. To every one else I shall be Leilah, and a Peri to you alone, for it is your happiness I seek, and the world would not forgive you if it were superior to its own. Though I am a fairy, I shall have hard work to protect you against the envy and the wickedness of men."

These terms were accepted with delight by Mahmoud Ben Ahmed, and the wedding took place exactly as if he were marrying Leilah.

Such, in substance, is the story I dictated to Scheherazade by Francesco's intermediary.

"What did Schahariar think of your Arabian tale, and what became of Scheherazade?"

I have never seen her since.

I fancy that Schahariar, dissatisfied with this story, ended by ordering the poor sultana to be beheaded. Friends of mine, who have come back from Bagdad, tell me they saw seated on the steps of a temple, a woman whose particular craze was that she believed herself the Dinarzade of "The Thousand and One Nights," and who kept repeating incessantly the single phrase: —

"Sister, tell us one of those fine stories you know so well how to relate."

She would wait for a few moments, listening intently, then as no one answered, she would weep bitterly, and wipe her eyes with a handkerchief embroidered with gold and spotted with stains of blood.

Elias Wildmanstadius

ELIAS WILDMANSTADIUS
or THE MEDIÆVAL MAN

Laudator temporis acti.

HORACE.

The bossy cathedral formed his carapace.

VICTOR HUGO.

AMONG the innumerable varieties of Young France, undoubtedly one of the most striking is that which is now to engage our attention. There is the Byronian Young France, the artistic Young France, the passionate Young France, the fast liver, the quid-chewing, the smoking Young France, bearded or beardless, placed by certain naturalists among the pachyderms, by others among the palmipeds, either classification appearing to me equally sound. But of all the species of Young France, the mediæval is the most numerous, and the individuals of which it is composed are most interesting to examine. I shall pick out one in particular, friend reader, who will enable you to get an idea of the genus, in the event of your not having been fortunate enough to see one either

alive or stuffed. This specimen being dead, I may tell you his name. He was called Elias Wildmanstadius, a very fine name for a mediæval man, especially as it was not a pseudonym. Also he was sincere in his madness, and therein differed greatly from others who merely affected craziness in order to follow the fashion or by way of mannerism.

I must ask to be forgiven the somewhat sentimental tone of this account. Elias Wildmanstadius was my friend, and he is dead. Besides, I feel the need of resting my lips after so much grinning as I have indulged in.

The angel whose business it is to open the gate of this world to incoming souls, had, by some strange forgetfulness, allowed his to pass through only some three centuries after the time fixed for his entrance into this life. So poor Elias Wildmanstadius, with a fifteenth-century soul in the midst of the nineteenth century, beliefs and love for another age in the midst of a selfish and prosaic civilisation, found himself as utterly out of place as a savage from the banks of the Orinoco transplanted into a fashionable Parisian club.

Feeling awkward and out of his element in a society for which he was not fitted, he had made up his mind

to live apart and to keep to himself. He constructed around himself a bit of the Middle Ages, very much like a lover who, having lost his love, has her mask moulded and dresses up a figure in the garments she used to wear. For this purpose he had rented one of the oldest houses in S——; a grimy, cracked, and seamed house, with leprous, moss-eaten walls, carved beams, overhanging eaves, ogee windows, and diamond panes that rattled in their leaden fillets at the least breath of wind.

It was rather too modern, in his opinion, for it did not go back earlier than 1550. He also considered and greatly regretted that the street front and the genuine Gothic look of the rest of the building, were spoiled by the introduction of vermiculated boss-work, channels, and attempts at Corinthian pillars betraying the influence of the early Renaissance.

In other respects it was the most inconvenient house in the town. The doors, which did not close tight, and the worm-eaten sashes allowed the wind to pass through as if they were mere sieves. The chimney-place, with its mantel-piece covered with armorial bearings, under which a whole family could sit in comfort, would have swallowed a whole oak at every one of its

huge mouthfuls, and it would have taken two men to shift the heavy brass-ball-top iron andirons.

The tapestries, representing passages at arms and other scenes of chivalry, were falling in rags; the walls were heavy with damp, and a few darkened paintings hung here and there in dusty frames.

In order to make the illusion perfect, Elias Wildmanstadius had collected at great expense the oldest furniture he could find: huge oaken arm-chairs with ear-protectors, upholstered in Cordova leather and studded with big nails; massive tables with twisted legs; bedsteads with platforms and dais; ebony dressers inlaid with mother-of-pearl and fillets of brass; panoplies of various epochs, in short, all the rusty, dusty bric-à-brac which a passing age bequeaths to the next as a memento of its existence, and which painters and antiquarians fight over in second-hand dealers' shops.

In order to match his furniture and to avoid discords, he always wore at home a mediæval costume. And it was most entertaining to see the good Elias Wildmanstadius in a samite surcoat charged with a coat of arms, particoloured legs, long pointed shoes, his hair parted in the middle, a toque on his head, a dagger and an alms-bag at his side, gravely wandering through the

deserted rooms like an apparition of by-gone days. Occasionally he put on a full suit of armour, and took great pleasure in listening to the way the steel clanked as he walked.

His love of past times extended even to matters of cookery. Comfit-boxes and goblets had to be placed on the board; he would eat only pheasants with their feathers on, roast peacocks, and other knightly viands. If any more commonplace and pleasant dish made its appearance, he waxed mightily wroth, and when Martha, his old housekeeper, served him with faro or lambick instead of mead or beer, he came near to thrashing her.

For the same reason he would not have any printed books in his library, unless they were in the earliest Gothic type, for he abhorred Gutenberg's invention equally with that of artillery. On the other hand, his shelves were laden down with innumerable beautiful manuscripts on vellum, with silver clasps and corners, and parchment or velvet bindings. He admired with childish simplicity the illustrations on the frontispieces, the ornaments in the margins, the illuminated capitals at the beginnings of chapters; he went into ecstasies over the stiff figures of saints with golden

eyelids and eyes of blue, and the lovely angels with white and rose wings; he was afraid of the devils and the dragons, and believed in every legend, no matter how absurd it might be, provided the text were in contracted Gothic and the title in big red letters.

He held very odd opinions in the matter of painting; he would not look at anything outside fifteenth-century pictures; he cared for Mabuse, Jacquemin Gringonneur, Giotto, Perugino, and a few other artists of the same sort only. Raphael was almost too recent for him.

He knew nothing of music in the condition to which it has been brought by Rossini, Mozart, and Weber. Instead of *Di tanti palpiti*, he sang, —

All is verloren
Tinteloren,
All is verloren, bei Gott !

of Clement Janequin's defeat of the Swiss at Marignano, or some other similar air by Ockeghem, Francesco Rosello, Constantio Festa, or Hobrecht. He refused to be more modern than that.

He did not know the names, even, of the instruments in use at the present day, but, on the other hand, he was well acquainted with the sackbut, the kettle-

drum, the rigolls, the virginals, the psaltery, and the rebec, and at need could have performed on them.

In literature he could quote accurately from the most obscure romances: "Parthenope of Blois," "Huon of Bordeaux," "Atys and Profilas," the "San Graal," "Dolopathos," "Perceforest," and very many more, but he had no idea there had ever existed such persons as Byron and Goethe. He could relate in detail the chronicles of some Breton kinglet anterior to Graalon and Conan, but would have been greatly surprised had he been talked to about Napoleon.

When he had perforce to write to any one, he did it in so archaic a style and in so wholly obsolete a hand that it was impossible to make out a single word, and recourse was had to the local curator of ancient documents.

His conversation so bristled with antiquated turns and forgotten expressions that his every sentence was a riddle and required a glossary.

Withal he had a pious and loving heart; he understood art, but that simple-minded art which believes in itself and its work, the Gothic art, patient and enthusiastic, which makes giant miniatures, cathedrals wrought like gems and steeples two hundred feet high as finished

as the setting of a ring. He had a deep feeling for architecture, and would have designed Notre-Dame and the Cathedral at Bourges had they not already existed. Had he lived three hundred years earlier, his name would have come down to us, through the echoing ages, among the very few names that survive and never are forgot, but, like many more, he had come at the wrong time, and was merely a sort of madman. He would have been one of the greatest geniuses, and his life would have been full and rounded out; as it was, he was compelled to create a fictitious one for himself and to trick himself into the belief that he was living in his own proper age.

Shocked by the commonplace and mercantile look of the inhabitants and the anti-picturesque monotony of the new buildings, he either had to stay at home or, if he ventured out, to confine himself to visiting and exploring every corner and nook of his dear old cathedral. That was his greatest pleasure, and he would spend whole hours in contemplation there. The traceried spire, the light finials, the corbelled gables, the flowered crosses, the dragons and monsters grimacing and showing their teeth at the corners of the roofs, the ever-blossoming rose-windows, the three porches with

their ruffs of saints, the delicately carved trefoils, the clusters of slender, lissome pillars, the quaintly wrought niches wildered o'er with arabesques, the *bassi-relievi*, the emblems, the heraldic figures, the tiniest bit of lace-work in the stone broidery, the smallest stitch in the granite cambric, all could he have drawn without seeing it, so vivid in his mind were the smallest details of his beloved church. It was his mistress, the lady of his thoughts, and not the most beautiful woman on earth could have tempted him to be unfaithful to it. He dreamed of it; he forgot to eat and drink because of it; he was happy only when in the shadow of its ancient arches, and there he was at home, amid surroundings that were in harmony with him. By dint of living in the company of slender columns, of silent and lissome pillars, he had in a way acquired their shape; he was so thin and tall that he might easily have been mistaken for an additional pillar, especially as his curly hair was not unlike the acanthus leaves of the capitals.

He had thoroughly studied the history of the basilica and its construction; he could tell accurately the year in which the apse or the choir had been erected, when the high altar, the rood-screen, the nave, and the side

chapels had been built. He had ascertained the age of each stone; he knew exactly what had been the cost of the joiner work on the stalls, the wardens' pew, and the pulpit; how long it had taken to set the key-stone in the vaulting, to suspend the lancet, and the pendentive; he read without difficulty the inscriptions on the tombstones; he could explain every coat of arms; he was acquainted with the subject of each painting and of every picture in stained glass; he could relate the fact that the organ, given by an Emperor of the West, was the first that had been seen in Europe; and not these only, but many more things could he tell, for if he were allowed to go on he never could talk enough upon that subject; whenever he entered upon it, his face lighted up and his dull blue eyes shone with extraordinary brilliancy. It was at such times that the poor soul, forgotten in some corner of heaven by its guardian angel, no doubt in love with some Eloa or other, and cast too late into a world whence all its sister souls had vanished, enjoyed the purest and most ineffable joy, for it believed itself living in 1500.

To while away his weary hours, gentle Elias Wildmanstadius cut, with his penknife, tiny cathedrals out

of cork, illumined miniatures in the Gothic manner, transcribed ancient chronicles and painted portraits of Madonnas with gilded haloes and aureoles.

Thus did he live for many years, little understood and unable to understand. His end was worthy of his life: two years ago the cathedral was struck by lightning, which wrought great havoc. Through some mysterious sympathy, gentle Elias died suddenly, exactly at the same moment, in his own house (the one at the corner of the Old Market, with a Madonna), seated in his big arm-chair, just as he was finishing a sketch of the cathedral.

He was interred, in accordance with his request, in the chapel where so many hours of his life had been spent, under the very stone he had worn with his knees. And now he is above, in the company of the Virgin and the cherubs and the saints he loved so dearly, in the glorious Paradise, all azure and gold, and his happiness would no doubt be unalloyed but for the fact that the style of the epitaph and the kind of letters used are plainly modern.

Daniel Jovard

DANIEL JOVARD

or THE CONVERSION OF A CLASSICIST

With divine afflatus filled, my brain reels again !
A breath runs o'er my quivering lyre ;
Ye Muses, Sisters chaste, and thou, Apollo great,
Adown the sacred vale my steps now guide !
My flight upbear, my mind inspire !
For deep I mean the Pierian spring to drain,
And on its verdant bank, under the myrtles prone,
To make the echoes with my song resound.

DANIEL JOVARD, *before his conversion.*

Hell and damnation ! I feel a fierce desire
To tear with fang-like teeth her flesh, and drag,
With bloody shreds of livid, greenish skin,
Her putrid heart from out her open breast !

The same DANIEL JOVARD, *after his conversion.*

I KNEW, I still know, a worthy young fellow called Daniel Jovard ; simply Daniel Jovard, much to his sorrow, for if one pronounces *v* like *b*, as the Gascons do, the two unfortunate syllables of his name form a most unflattering epithet (Jobard, ninny).

The father who transmitted this unhappy appellation to him was an ironmonger, and had his shop in one of the narrow streets opening into the Rue Saint-Denis. As he had accumulated a comfortable sum of money by selling brass wire for hanging bells, and bells for hanging on to the brass wire, as he had also risen to the rank of sergeant in the National Guard of the day, and threatened to become a voter, he considered that he owed it to himself as a man of good repute, a sergeant in active service and an expectant voter, to have little Daniel Jovard, heir presumptive to these many prerogatives, present and to come, educated in the most brilliant manner.

It should be said that, in the opinion of his sire and his mother, it would have been difficult to come across a more wonderful youth than Daniel Jovard. For my part, as I do not behold him through the favourable prism of paternity, I shall merely state that he was a stout, chubby-cheeked lad, as good as gold, whom his enemies found it difficult to slander and his friends hard to praise. He was neither handsome nor ugly; he possessed a pair of eyes with eyebrows set over them, a nose in the middle of his face, a mouth below that, and a chin below the mouth; he had two ears, neither more

nor less, and hair of an uncertain colour. It would not be telling the truth to say that he looked well, and it would not be telling it to say he did not look well. He had no look in particular; he looked like everybody else; he was a representative of the multitude, the type of the typeless, and it was the easiest thing in the world to mistake him for somebody else.

His dress was in no wise remarkable; there was nothing about it to attract attention; its only use was to prevent his going about in a state of nudity. As for elegance, grace, and fashion, these are out of the question; such things are unknown in that part of the still uncivilised world called the Rue Saint-Denis.

He wore a white muslin cravat, a shirt-collar that majestically cut off his ears with its two triangular starched linen corners; a goat-hair canary-yellow waistcoat, cut in shawl fashion, a bell-crowned hat, a blue-bottle coat, gray trousers showing the ankles, laced shoes and deerskin gloves. I am bound to confess that his stockings were blue, and if the selection of this shade strikes my reader as odd I hasten to explain that they had formed part of his school outfit and that he was wearing them out. He wore his watch at the end of a metal chain, instead of having it hung, as becomes a

proper man, at the end of a neat silk ribbon, with a pawn-ticket in place of the ticker.

He had gone regularly through all his studies, and had done the rhetoric twice over, as was customary. He had written as many impositions, and given and received as many bloody noses as any of his companions. I can paint him in a couple of words: he was great on exercises, but he knew just about as much Latin and Greek as you and I do, and in addition had a very imperfect knowledge of French. So you see that young Daniel Jovard was a youth of great promise. If he had chosen to study and work hard, he might have become a delightful bagman or a charming junior clerk to a notary.

He was a devil of a Voltairian, like his father, successful man, sergeant, voter, and householder. In school he had read on the sly Voltaire's "Maid of Orleans," "The War of the Gods," Volney's "Ruins," and other books of that kidney; consequently he was a free thinker, like De Jouy, and a hater of priests, like Fontan. The "Constitutionnel" had no greater dread of the Jesuits than he had, whether these gentlemen, whom he believed he saw all around him, wore clerical or secular dress. In matters literary, he

was as advanced as in politics and religion. He did not say Nicolas Boileau, but Boileau; he would have affirmed unhesitatingly that the Romanticists danced round Racine's bust after the triumph of "Hernani;" if he had taken snuff, which he did not, he would certainly have taken it out of a Touquet snuff-box; he considered that "soldier" rimed very well with "campaigner," and fitted in admirably with "glory," whether preceded or followed by "victory." As a Frenchman, by nature waggish, he preferred the vaudeville and the comic opera, which are national forms, as the papers say; but he was also very fond of a leg of mutton rubbed with garlic, and of a tragedy in five acts.

It was fine to hear him, on Sunday evenings, in Mr. Jovard's back-shop, thundering against the corrupters of taste, the retrogressive innovators (Daniel Jovard flourished in 1828), the Welches, the Vandals, the Goths, the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, and so on, who sought to take us back to barbarism and feudality, and to change the language of the great masters for a hybrid, unintelligible jargon. And it was finer still to see the look of amazement on the faces of his father, his mother, and their neighbour and his wife.

Great man, Daniel Jovard. He would sooner have

denied the existence of Montmartre than that of Parnassus; sooner denied the virtue of his cousin, with whom, as was proper, he was in love, than denied the virtue of a single one of the nine Muses. Good old chap, Daniel Jovard. I do not quite know what he did not believe, in spite of his being a free-thinker. It is quite true that he did not believe in God, but, on the other hand, he did believe in Jupiter, in M. Arnault, and in Baour likewise; he also believed in the Marquis de Saint-Aulaire's quatrain, in the youthfulness of the ladies who play the part of young maidens on the stage, in M. Jay's conversions, and he even believed in the promises of dentists and rulers of the earth.

No one could possibly be more antediluvian and more of a fossil than he. If by any chance he had written a book and had stuck a preface to it, he would have gone down on his marrow-bones and begged the public's pardon for the liberty he had taken; he would have maundered about his feeble attempts, his slight sketches, his timid preludes, for, in addition to the beliefs I have enumerated, he also believed in the public and in posterity.

To bring this lengthy psychological analysis to a close and to give my reader a clear conception of the

man, I shall add that he sang quite nicely "Fleuve du Tage" and "Femme sensible;" that he declaimed Théramène's long story as well as Desmousseaux' beard does; that he was very successful in drawing the nose of Olympic Jove, and that he was distinctly a fair player at loto.

It was in such charming and patriarchal occupations that Daniel Jovard's days, spun of silk and gold (old style), passed by, each like unto the other. His soul was undisturbed by vague aspirations, his heart unmoved by virile passions; he had not yet requested the use of a woman's lap for the purpose of resting thereon his genius's brow. He ate, drank, slept, digested, and classically performed all the functions of life, and under his vulgar exterior no one could have suspected there lurked a man about to be great.

It needs but a spark, however, to set fire to a barrel of powder; youthful Achilles was aroused by the sight of a sword. Let me tell you how the genius of the illustrious Daniel Jovard flashed into light.

He had gone to the Théâtre-Français in order to improve his taste and his delivery by witnessing the performance of some play or other, I have forgotten which. That is not true; I know very well which it

was, but I will not give its name, lest the characters should be too easily recognised. Daniel was seated alongside twenty-nine other spectators, on one of the pit seats, his attention concentrated on the play as keenly as if he had newly arrived from the country.

Between the acts he carefully polished up his father's large opera-glasses, which were enclosed in a chagreen case mounted with horn, and began to gaze at the infrequent spectators scattered here and there in the boxes and galleries.

In a stage-box a young dandy, toying carelessly with his enamelled gold glasses, spread himself and showed off his graces utterly inattentive to the many glasses levelled at him. He was dressed in the most eccentric and most careful manner. A curiously cut coat, opened well out and lined with velvet, allowed to be seen a vest of dazzling colour, shaped like a doublet; tight-fitting black trousers outlined his hips; a gold chain, resembling the collar of an order of knighthood, gleamed on his breast, and his head rose straight out of his satin cravat, without the white line that was obligatory in those days. He looked like a portrait by Francis Porbus. His hair cropped close in the Henry III fashion, his fan-shaped beard, his eyebrows turned up towards the

temples, his long, white hands, on one of which he wore a signet ring set in a Gothic design, nothing was wanting, and the illusion was absolutely perfect.

After long hesitation Daniel Jovard concluded that the fashionable young fellow could be no one but Ferdinand de C——, his old school-mate, though his present get-up made him look utterly different from his old self.

Now, my dear reader, I can see you pursing up your mouth and declaring that all this is most unlikely; that it is absurd to perch in a stage-box at the Français a swell of the new school, especially on a day when a Classical performance is being given, and that I have been compelled to have recourse to this barefaced expedient in order to bring my hero, Daniel Jovard, to see him. You will make many more remarks, and some others besides,

> "But, . . . on my faith as a gentleman,
> I care not a stiver for any of them,"

for I have in one of the recesses of my logic, expressly for the purpose of knocking you down with it, the very best reason ever put forward by a man who was in the wrong.

This is the dazzling reason why Ferdinand de C—— was at the Français on that particular evening.

He had a mistress, a Doña Sol, under the watch and ward of a good old, broken-down, venerable and jealous lord; he could meet her but rarely, and then with the liveliest fear of being surprised with her. He had therefore appointed to meet her at the Théâtre-Français as being the most solitary and unfrequented place to be found in any part of the world, Polynesia included, for the Terrace of the Feuillants and the horse-chestnut grove by the waterside are so generally famous as solitary resorts throughout Europe, that it is impossible to go two yards in them without treading on somebody's toes and elbowing an amorous couple.

I assure you that I have no other reason than this to offer you, and as I shall not take the trouble to look for any other, you will have to be good enough to be satisfied with it.

Now, then, let me get on with this true and strange story. The dandy went out between the acts; the non-dandy Daniel Jovard went out also, for dandies and plain bodies, great men and small ones often do just the same things. By chance they met in the foyer. Daniel Jovard bowed first and advanced towards Ferdinand. When the swell beheld this uncouth person bearing down upon him, he hesitated for a second and

very nearly swung on his heel to avoid returning his bow, but the glance he cast around him having revealed the awful solitude of the foyer, he resigned himself to his fate and unflinchingly awaited his friend's approach. This is one of the finest things he ever did.

After exchanging greetings they naturally began to talk about the play. Daniel Jovard benevolently admired it, and was immensely surprised to find that his friend Ferdinand de C——, in whom he had always reposed the greatest confidence, was of an utterly contrary opinion.

"My dear fellow," said Ferdinand to him, "the thing is worse than a sham; it is Empire, it is periwig, it is rococo, pompadour; a man must be a mummy or a fossil, a member of the Institute or a Pompeian relic, to take any pleasure in balderdash of that sort. It is so deadly cold that it would freeze jets of water shooting up into the air; those gawky hexameters that toddle along arm in arm like invalids returning home from the wine-shop, the one propping up the other, and we keeping the lot steady, are really beneath contempt. The lanky substantives followed like shadows by their adjectives, the prudish periphrases with the secondary periphrases carrying their

trains, are a confounded nuisance with their way of showing themselves off among the passions and the situations in the drama; the conspirators who amuse themselves shouting under the portico of the tyrant, who takes good care to turn a deaf ear to the din, the princes and princesses with their inevitable confidants, the dagger-thrust and the final narration in fine polished verse,— tell me, are these things not enough to make the walls themselves yawn for very weariness and wretchedness?"

"But what about Aristotle and Boileau and the busts?"

"A fig for them! They worked for the men of their day; if they were to return to earth now, it is likely they would do the very opposite of what they did then. They are dead as door nails; dead like many more who were every bit as good as they. Let these geniuses fall asleep, even as they put us to sleep; I have no objection to that. They fooled the fools of their day with sugar, and the fools of the present day prefer pepper; let us have pepper then; that is the secret of every literary school. Drink! That is the answer given by the bottle divine and the end of all things. To drink and to eat is the be-all and the end-all; the

rest is but the means to this end, and it matters little whether one reaches it through tragedy or drama; the only thing is that tragedy is no longer current.

"I dare say you will tell me that it is more honourable and surer to cobble shoes or sell matches, and I agree with you; but it is not given to every one to do these things; besides, they require an apprenticeship to be served. The profession of author is the only one nowadays that does not call for preparation; all that is necessary is to be indifferently acquainted with French and scarcely at all with orthography. Now if you want to write a book all you have to do is to take several books, which is essentially different from the recipe in the cookery-books that runs like this: 'To make jugged hare: Take a hare.' You, on the other hand cut out a leaf here and a leaf there, you make up a preface and a post-face, you adopt a pseudonym, you state that you died of consumption or that you have blown out your brains; you dish the concern up hot, and at once enjoy the finest success imaginable.

"There is one thing you must be very particular about; epigraphs. You must have epigraphs in English, in German, in Spanish, in Arabic, and if you can manage to get hold of one in Chinese, it will prove

very effective; and you will find yourself, without being a Panurge, in the enjoyment of a nice little reputation of polyglot and scholar, which you can very easily exploit.

"I see that you are surprised at what I am telling you, and that you are opening your eyes to the size of saucers. Simple-minded and artless being that you are, you had got into your head, in the most prosaic way possible, that all you had to do was to go to work conscientiously; you have not forgotten the *nonum prematur in annum*, and the 'Again and again put your work back on the frame.' That sort of thing is done with now; a book is written in three weeks, read in an hour and forgotten in fifteen minutes. And by the way, you used to scribble verses, if I am not mistaken, when you were at school. You still do so, I swear, for it is a habit that can no more be got rid of than that of smoking, gambling, or running after the girls."

A maidenly blush suffused Daniel Jovard's cheek. Ferdinand noted it and went on: —

"I am well aware that it is humiliating to be accused of being a poet, or a versifier at least, and that no man likes to have his baseness laid bare. But as the fact is there, you must turn your shame to account and try to

get good money for it. Strumpets and we both live on the public, and do a profitable business; we are at one in trying to get money out of the public by every possible allurement and cajolery. There are shame-faced voluptuaries that have to be urged, and who will pass and repass a score of times in front of a house of ill-fame without daring to enter; you have to pull them by the sleeve and to say, 'Come in.' So there are irresolute and hesitating readers who need to be hunted out by our go-betweens — the newspapers. These tell them of the beauty of the book and of the novelty of the style, and shoulder them into the lupanar of book-shops. In a word, a man must know how to advertise himself and fill his balloon with gas."

Just then the bell rang to give warning that the curtain was going up. Ferdinand chucked his card to Daniel Jovard and vanished, after inviting him to call. In another minute his goddess had joined him in his stage-box, they drew the curtains, and—

But it is Daniel Jovard's story I am telling, and not Ferdinand's.

When the performance was over, Daniel returned to the paternal shop, but he was no longer the same as when he had emerged from it. The poor fellow had

gone out full of faith and sound principles; he was returning shaken in his beliefs, hesitating, and mistrusting his most serious convictions.

He did not sleep a wink the whole night; he turned and twisted like a carp on a gridiron. Everything he had till then worshipped he had just heard turned into derision; he was exactly in the position of a very stupid and very devout seminarist who has been listening to an atheist discussing religion. Ferdinand's remarks had awakened in him the heretical germs of revolt and incredulity that slumber in the depths of every man's conscience. Like a child who has been led to believe that it was found born in a cabbage, and whose imagination runs to the wildest excesses once it discovers it has been duped by a fiction, Daniel Jovard, who the day before had been a most proper Classicist, became, by reaction, the most thorough-paced Young France, the most wildly enthusiastic Romanticist that ever stormed and shouted at a performance of "Hernani." Every word spoken by Ferdinand had started new trains of thought in his mind, and although he did not clearly understand what it was he saw in the distance, he was none the less convinced it was that Promised Land of Poesy into which he had not hitherto

been permitted to enter. So in utmost perplexity of mind he waited impatiently until rosy-fingered dawn should have thrown open the gates of the Orient. At last the beloved of Cephisus sent a faint ray of light through the yellowed and smoky panes of my hero's windows. For the first time in his life he was absent-minded. Breakfast was served; he choked himself, and swallowed his chocolate at a gulp after bolting his chop. Old Mr. Jovard and his wife were amazed, for their illustrious offspring laid the greatest stress on proper mastication and digestion. Papa smiled a sly, knowing smile, the smile of a successful man who is also a sergeant and a voter, and came to the conclusion that the boy was decidedly in love.

Behold, Daniel, how long a stride in this new way your first has been! Already you are misunderstood and able to pose as an elegiacal poet! For the first time, something has been thought of you, and that something is wrong. O great man! You are supposed to be in love with a braid-maker or a milliner, at most, and it is Glory you are pining for! Already you are soaring far above these contemptible bourgeois with all the loftiness of your genius, as soars the eagle above the barnyard! From this moment you may

call yourself an artist, for you have your *profanum vulgus*.

As soon as he thought he might do so, he started for his friend's residence. Although it was now eleven o'clock, Ferdinand was not yet up, greatly to the surprise of our artless youth. While waiting for his host, he examined the furniture of the room ; it consisted of strangely shaped furniture of the days of Louis XIII, of Japanese vases, of large-patterned tapestries, of eccentric water-colours representing the dance of the witches and scenes from "Faust," and endless other incongruous objects, poniards, pipes, narghilehs, tobacco-pouches, and innumerable other trifles — the very existence of which Daniel Jovard had never suspected and the use of which he could not guess ; for in those days Daniel was fully convinced that the police regulations forbade the carrying of poniards and that sailors only could afford to smoke without losing caste.

He was shown in to Ferdinand's room. That gentleman wore a dressing-gown of old silk damask, covvered with figures of dragons and of mandarins engaged in sipping tea. His feet, shod in slippers embroidered with odd designs, reposed upon the white marble chimney-piece, so that he was resting almost on his

head. He was nonchalantly smoking a tiny Spanish cigarette.

He shook hands with his friend, took a pinch of fine golden tobacco from a lacquer box, rolled it up in a small piece of rice paper which he tore from a small packet, and handed the result to the innocent Daniel Jovard, who did not venture to refuse it. The poor fellow, who had never smoked in his life, wept like a pitcher returning from the well, and in his simplicity swallowed all the smoke. He spat and sneezed every minute, and he might have been a monkey swallowing medicine, so comical were his contortions. When he had finished, Ferdinand invited him to try another, but Daniel declined, and the talk went back to the subject they had discussed the night before, — literature; for at that time men talked literature just as now they talk politics, and formerly they talked of the weather. Some sort of subject, of matter, is always needed for the production of ideas.

At that time there was a perfect rage for proselytism, which led people to try to convert water-carriers even, and young fellows were apt to spend the time they passed with ladies in discussions, instead of more useful matters. This accounts for the fact that so great a

swell as Ferdinand the dandy did not disdain to spend three or four hours of his valuable time in catechising his ancient and unknown school-fellow. In a few words he laid bare before him all the secrets of the trade; took him behind the scenes at his very first lesson; taught him to put on a mediæval look; showed him how to acquire individuality and an air of his own; revealed to him the innermost meaning of the slang of the week; explained to him what was meant by "the ropes," "chic," "air," "art," "artistic," "artist;" the signification of "frumpish," "stunning," "busted;" opened up to him a vast repertory of formulæ of admiration and of reprobation: phosphorescent, transcendental, pyramidal, astounding, blasting, annihilating, and innumerable others it would be wearisome to repeat in this place; he exhibited to him the ascending and descending scale of the human mind; that at twenty a man was Young France, a Coningsby at twenty-five, and a Childe Harold at twenty-eight, provided he had travelled as far as Saint-Denis or Saint-Cloud; that thereafter a man did not count, and was successively known by the following appellations: back number, old fogey, zany, clod-pate, Bœotian, driveller, dotard, down to the lowest depth of decrepitude, until the most de-

grading epithet of all was reached, — Academician and member of the Institute ! which did not fail to happen when a man was forty or thereabouts. And all this in a single lesson ! A great teacher, in very sooth, was Ferdinand de C——.

Daniel did raise a few objections, but Ferdinand replied so coolly and so volubly to them, that if he had wished to persuade you, my reader, that you were no better than an idiot, he would have done it in less than fifteen minutes, in less time, indeed, than it takes me to write it. From that moment Daniel fell a prey to the most horrible ambition that ever seized upon a man.

On returning home, he found his father reading the "Constitutionnel," and he forthwith called him "National Guardsman !" To use "National Guardsman" as an insult, after but a single lesson, was, for him who had been brought up in jingoism and the cult of civic bayonets, a tremendous progress. He was going on with giant strides. He smashed his stove-pipe hat with his fist, cast off his swallow-tailed coat and swore by his soul that never again would he put it on. He climbed up to his room, opened the chest of drawers, pulled out all his shirts and pitilessly slashed the collar

off every one of them, using his mother's scissors for a guillotine. He lighted his fire, burned his Boileau, his Voltaire, and his Racine, burned all the classical verse he possessed, including his own performances, and it is only by wonderful good luck that the lines of his which I have used for an epigraph, escaped from this comprehensive combustion. He shut himself up in his den, and read every one of the new works that Ferdinand had lent him, until such time as he should have grown a chin tuft of sufficient dimensions to allow him to go forth into the world. It was six weeks before the tuft was grown to the required dimensions, nor was it even then much of a tuft, but its good intentions were evident, and that was enough.

In the meantime he had ordered from Ferdinand's tailor a complete suit of clothes of the latest Romanticist cut, and as soon as it was ready he put it on with fervour and lost no time in repairing to his friend's. Great was the sensation he created in the Rue Saint-Denis, which was unaccustomed to innovations of that sort. He proceeded majestically on his way, accompanied by a tail of naughty boys who kept on guying him, but he paid not the least attention to them, being already case-hardened against public opinion and feeling

nothing but contempt for the popular; which was a second stage in his progress.

He reached Ferdinand's and was complimented by him upon the change which had taken place in his appearance. Daniel himself called for a cigar and virtuously smoked it to the bitter end. Then Ferdinand, completing what he had so admirably begun, taught him a number of recipes and dodges for the production of various styles both in prose and verse. He showed him how to do the dreamy business, the home, the artistic, the Dantesque, the under-a-curse, and all this in the course of a single morning. For the dreamy business, he needed only a skiff, a lake, a weeping willow, a harp, a consumptive lady, and a few verses from the Bible; for the home, an old shoe, a jug, a wall, a broken pane, and a burned steak or other equivalent sorrow of the soul; for the artistic, to open at hap-hazard the first catalogue he came upon, and to take the names of painters ending in *i* or *o*, and especially to take care to call Titian Tiziano, and Veronese Paolo Cagliari; for the Dantesque, to use plentifully "therefore," "if," "now," "because," "that is why;" for the under-a-curse, to stick into every line "Ah!" "Oh!" "Anathema!" "Malediction!" "Hell!" and so on, until life gave out.

He also showed him how to set about finding rich rimes; he smashed a number of lines for him; he taught him how to make one Alexandrine gaily perform the high kick in the face of the next one, after the manner of a dancer who ends her pirouette with her toe against the nose of the other who is hopping up and down behind her; he exhibited to him a flamboyant palette: black, red, blue, all the colours of the rainbow, a regular peacock's-tail; he also made him commit to memory a number of anatomical terms in order to be in a position to talk of dead bodies in suitable language, and dismissed him a past master in the gay science of Romanticism.

It is horrible to reflect that a few days had sufficed for the destruction of convictions cherished for years. But how was it possible for him to go on believing in a religion that had been turned into ridicule, especially when the man who ran it down talked fast, loud, long, and cleverly, in a handsome room and in an incredible dress?

Daniel acted exactly as prudes do. Once they have sinned, they throw off the mask and become the most shameless besoms of them all. Daniel thought he was bound to be all the more a Romanticist that he had

once been a Classicist, and he it was who got off that ever to be remembered remark: "If I were to meet that scamp of a Racine, I would run him through with my riding whip." As also this other, equally famous: "To the guillotine with the Classicists!" which he shouted standing on his seat at one of the performances of "Hernani." So true it is that he had passed from the most constitutional Voltairianism to the most cannibalistic and ferocious Hugolatry.

Until that day dawned Daniel Jovard had rejoiced in the possession of a forehead, much in the way that Jourdain talked in prose; that is, he was not aware of it and had never paid the least attention to it. His forehead was neither very lofty nor very low; it was merely a plain kind of a forehead that did not worry about itself. Daniel resolved to turn it into a mighty brow, the brow of a man of genius, like unto the brows of the great men of the day. In order to do this, he shaved off an inch or two of his hair, and increased it by so much, and he shaved his temples clean. In this way he secured a lofty forehead as gigantic as might reasonably be expected.

Then, having a mighty brow, he thirsted, mightily, of course, for a reputation, if not for fame.

But could he throw to a careless and quizzical public the six ridiculous letters that formed his patronymic? Daniel might do at a pinch, but Jovard! what a horrible name! How could he sign Jovard to an elegy? It would be awful, and would suffice to damn the most splendid of poems.

He spent six months in quest of a pseudonym, and by dint of trying and racking his brains he managed to find one. The first name ended in *us*, and the surname was stuffed as full of *k's*, *w's* and other similar Romanticist consonants as he could cram into eight syllables. Even a postman would have taken six days and six nights merely to spell it out.

Having achieved this fine result, the next thing was to inform the public of the fact. Daniel did all he could, but his reputation was far from spreading as rapidly as he desired, for it is hard to drive a name into other people's heads, which are already so full of names, when it has to be got in between that of a mistress and that of a creditor, between a venture on Change and a speculation in sugar. The number of great men is so formidable that unless one is provided with a memory like that of Darius, Cæsar, or Father Ménétrier, it is very difficult to remember them all.

I should never be done if I attempted to relate all the mad suggestions that passed through poor Daniel Jovard's cracked brain. He was often seized with the fancy to write his name on every dead wall, between the obscene sketches and other abominations of that day. He was madly envious of Crédeville, whose name was known to every dweller in Paris, thanks to its being displayed at every corner. He would have been glad to be called Crédeville, even at the cost of being also called thief, this appellation invariably accompanying the other.

Then he bethought himself of sending the laboriously thought-out name wandering around on the breasts and backs of the sandwich men, or of having it embroidered on his own vest, in big letters, and this long before the Saint-Simonians got hold of the idea.

He spent a fortnight discussing whether he should commit suicide, so that he might get his name into the papers; and on hearing the sentence of death of a criminal shouted out in the streets he felt tempted to murder somebody and thus be condemned to the guillotine, which would draw public attention to him. Fortunately for him and for us, he resisted virtuously and did not flesh his maiden dagger.

In this extremity, he turned to less striking methods. He wrote a multitude of poems that appeared in still-born papers, and thus greatly increased his reputation. He made the acquaintance of a number of painters and sculptors of the new school, and in return for meals and the loan of ready cash, without interest, of course, he had himself painted, carved, and lithographed in every possible attitude: full face, in profile, three quarters, foreshortened and seen from below, seen from above, from behind, and so on. My reader must certainly have noticed his portrait at the Salon or in the show-windows of the picture dealers; a very small face, a huge forehead, a great beard, fuzzy-wuzzy hair, bent brows, upturned eyes, as is the custom of Byronic geniuses. It is easily recognised by the name, which is written in the oddest and most startling characters, as if it were a cabalistic formula or a rune from the Edda.

He resorts to every possible means of calling attention to himself; his hat is more steeple-crowned than any one else's; he wears a beard larger than the beards of three sappers put together, and his renown grows as grows the beard. You happen to be wearing a red vest to-day, you may be sure that to-morrow he will

sport a scarlet one. Do look at him, I beseech you. He works so hard to get a single glance from you; he begs for one as other men beg for places or favours. Do not take him for one of the vulgar herd; he would throw himself over the bridge. To attract your attention, he would be willing to walk on his hands and to ride your horse with his face to the tail.

I am really surprised that he has not yet taken to wearing gloves on his feet and shoes on his hands, which would certainly be very striking. He is to be seen everywhere: at balls, at concerts, in painters' studios, in the studies of popular poets. For the past two years he has not failed to attend a first performance. You can see him, without extra charge, in the right-hand balcony where artists and literary men generally sit. He is often as entertaining as the performance itself. He has the right to go behind the scenes; the prompter calls him "old chap," and shakes hands with him; the chorus girls bow to him, and by next year the prima donna will speak to him. You can see that he has made his way quickly. He has a novel on the stocks, and also a poem. He has been promised a hearing for a drama which he will certainly write; he is to be on the staff of a leading paper, and I under-

stand that he has received proposals from a fashionable publisher. Already his name is to be found in every catalogue, as follows: "A new Novel, by —— US KWPL——. In six months' time the title will be announced, made out of the first noun that occurs to him; next, the seventh edition will be put on sale, even though the first has not appeared, and ere long, thanks to Ferdinand's teaching, to his beard and his coat, Daniel Jovard will be one of the brightest stars in the new Pleiades that gleam in our literary heavens.

Dear and gentle reader, I have here told you, while relating Daniel Jovard's story, the way to become illustrious, and given you the recipe by means of which one may turn out a genius, or at least may comfortably do without genius. I hope your gratitude will be proportionate to the service I have done you. It lies with you to be a great man; you now know how to set about it. It is, in sooth, not difficult, and if I myself am not a great man, it is simply because I do not care to be one. I am too proud.

The Bowl of Punch

THE BOWL OF PUNCH

The dishevelled orgy.

De Balzac.

The dishevelled orgy.

Jules Janin.

The dishevelled orgy.

P. L. Jacob.

The dishevelled orgy.

Eugène Sue.

A QUEER room was that of our friend Philadelphus. It is true that like all rooms, like yours and mine, it had four walls, a ceiling, and a floor, but it was the way it was decorated that gave it a strangely odd aspect.

Fantastic pictures were hung on the walls in curiously carved frames: pastels of the time of the Regency, smiling and rouged, were displayed by the side of stiff angelic figures on gold backgrounds in the manner of Giotto and Orcagna. Engravings and etchings were crowded in so disorderly a fashion along the wainscotting that it was impossible to look at one without disturbing two or three of the others.

Rembrandt elbowed Watteau; one of Pater's entertainments lapped over a sibyl's face by Michael Angelo; a Tartaglia by Gallot kicked Hyacinthe Rigaud's portrait of the Great King; a fleshy, sensuous nude by Rubens caused an ascetic drawing by Moralès to look down; a libertine water-colour by Boocher impudently turned its back upon a prudish Madonna by stern Albrecht Dürer; in short, the walls were as full of antitheses as a tragedy of the days of the Empire.

Quantities of oddly shaped and dissonant articles were strewn upon the tables, brackets, small tables, chairs, arm-chairs, and, generally speaking, upon anything with a fairly level surface. In an unoccupied arm-chair was stuck a tall Flemish flagon with heron-like neck amid bossy dishes and enamels by Bernard Palissy. Blue Japanese jars, edible swallow's-nests, carps, and green cats from China were scattered upon worm-eaten stools of the time of Louis XIII.

A death's head, with spectacles on its nose, a Greek smoking-cap on its cranium, and a richly coloured pipe in its mouth, made faces at a porcelain figure placed at the other end of the mantlepiece, while deformed mandragoras writhed hideously, pell-mell with petrifications and madreporæ, on an empty shelf in the bookcase.

It was still worse on the centre table, for assuredly it would have been impossible to collect in any smaller space any larger number of objects having an air and a character of their own. There were: —

A Turkish slipper,

A marchioness's slipper,

A yataghan,

A fencing foil,

A missal,

An Aretino,

A medallion by Antonin Moine,

Some papel español para cigaritos,

Love letters,

A Toledo dagger,

A champagne glass,

A shell-hilted sword,

Obscene sketches by Clodion,

A small Egyptian idol,

Packages of various kinds of tobacco (the packages burst open and exhibiting their golden entrails),

A stuffed peacock,

Victor Hugo's "Orientales,"

A muleteer's net for the hair,

A palette,

A guitar,

A something or other, in a fine state of preservation, and I know not what else, — a mess, a higgledy-piggledy that would have tired out the most intrepid enumerator, whether he were Rabelais or Charles Nodier.

It is probable that the chairs and arm-chairs had been at Marignano with the Saltabadil stools; some of them were crippled in the legs, others in the arms; not one had more than three legs or more than one arm.

I need not, of course, draw your attention, O judicious reader, to the fact that the above description is simply superb, and that it has been composed in accordance with the most recent recipes. It yields the pride of place to none, save and except those by M. de Balzac only, for he alone is capable of writing a longer one. I have dressed up my sentences, hitherto so plain; I have sewn spangles upon their linen gowns, put glass beads and other imitation gems in their hair, pinchbeck rings on their fingers, and there they go now, as proud and conceited as if their jewels were not every one imitation and their diamonds glass.

I do it because it might otherwise be supposed that they go about in nudity and humility simply because I cannot afford to dress them up, but by Jove! I mean to

show that I am just as well able to do so as if I had no talent, and I am bound to take it for granted that I have plenty if I have been clever enough to bring you through so many pages upon this audacious and immodest assertion. With a couple of strokes of the pen I shall make them skirts of adjectives, corsets of periphrases and head-gear of metaphors. At every paragraph I shall hereafter let off fireworks of style; there shall be golden rains of nouns, Roman candles of adverbs, and Bengal fires of personal pronouns. It shall be so gorgeous, refulgent, rutilant, phosphorescent, and scintillant that you will have to close your eyes in order to read it.

And not only is this description magnificent and worthy of being inserted in manuals of literature, it also surpasses ordinary descriptions by its uncommonly rare merit, namely, that it is perfectly apposite, and of unquestionable use in the work of which it forms part.

This is the case, since, having undertaken to write a physiological account of the biped called Young France, I came to the conclusion that after having carefully told the number of its nails and the length of its hair, the colour of its skin and its habits and appetites, it would be exceedingly interesting to let my

reader know where this biped lives and roosts, and it occurred to me that the description of the room would have as much importance, in the opinion of naturalists, as that of a tit's or a parrakeet's nest.

Nor were the seven or eight people assembled in this room any less remarkable. The figures were, in every respect, worthy of their setting.

They did not wear the French dress; indeed, it would have been difficult to name the exact period and country to which it belonged. One man wore his beard cut in the fashion of Francis I; another had a tuft and his hair cropped short, like Saint-Mégrin; a third wore a chin tuft like Cardinal Richelieu, and the others, who were still too young to own so important an accessory, made up for it by their exceedingly long hair.

One was dressed in a black velvet doublet and tight-fitting trews, like a mediæval archer; another had on the costume of a member of the National Convention, with a swell's steeple-crowned hat; a third sported a dandy's frock-coat, of most exaggerated cut, and a Henry IV ruff. Every portion of their attire was carried out in the same style, and it really seemed that they had picked out, at hap-hazard and with their eyes

shut, in the wardrobe of ages, the garments needed to make up some sort of an outfit for themselves.

The pursuits in which these worthies were engaged were fully worthy of them.

The Francis I man was singing a Spanish song out of tune, with a Normandy accent.

The Saint-Mégrin fellow was playing at cup and ball, or firing pellets from a sarbacan.

The Richelieu image was gravely smoking a cigar that had gone out.

The National Convention representative was relating his love affairs in a voice of thunder to his friend the dandy, and pledging him to secrecy.

The archer chap was reading the "Courrier des Théâtres," and the dandy was lopping off the heads of flies with the stalks of cherries.

Philadelphus, the master of the house, was making a Y with his arms and an O with his mouth, as he yawned in the most fatherly manner.

In a word, the whole company appeared to be enjoying itself but slightly, and to be heartily wishing itself elsewhere. I do believe, so desperately bored were they, that they would not have declined tickets to the Opéra-Comique or the Vaudeville.

Albert. By the horns of my father, this is as dull as a meeting of the Academy.

Rudolph. I feel as if I were at the Théâtre-Français.

Theodore. What shall we do to kill time? Suppose we were to fence?

Albert. The foils are broken.

Theodore. What do you say to throwing dice?

Albert. Philadelphus's dice are loaded.

Theodore. Let us read one of de Bouilly's stories. It would be colossally funny.

Albert. You might as well ask us to swallow soaked bread without salt.

Theodore. Let each man tell his love affairs, then.

Omnes. What is that? You muff! you owl! It would be deadly dull and monotonous. Down with the motion! Down with the mover!

Roderick. Let us have music.

All, in accents of deepest dismay. No! no! no!

Philadelphus. The piano is out of tune, and besides it is very small fun to watch a poor devil sweating away at a keyboard like the trained rabbit that played the drum in Charles X's honour.

Theodore. I would rather have Roderick's mouth filled with scalding hot pap than with *G*'s and *C*'s, the

more so that very often *G* is *C* and *C* is *G*, while pap always is pap, and gags him in proper fashion.

Philadelphus. It would look nice, would n't it, for us to take to singing drawing-room ballads like a lot of ninnies fresh from boarding-school.

All. To the devil with music, and most especially to the devil with the musician!

Roderick. Well, what are we going to do, when all is said and done?

Rudolph, in most dithyrambic tones. By my soul and body, gentlemen, you ought to have webbed hands, for in truth you are a set of geese.

Philadelphus. The goose is as white as a swan, and a swan is web-footed like a goose, and when a man is short-sighted, he is apt to mistake the one for the other. It is plain, my friend, that you have forgotten to put on your spectacles. Just rub the lenses on your coat-sleeve, and look; you will perceive that we are mighty geniuses, not fools; swans, not geese.

Albert. Goose or swan matters not, for at a distance the effect is the same. At this particular moment I have one advantage over you especially, and over all in general: I have an idea, and evidently that is not the case with any of you.

Philadelphus. Listen to the conceited fellow who claims to possess an idea! You have just as few ideas as you have women.

Albert. That is where you are mistaken. I have three women and one idea, and in that respect I differ from you, for you may possibly own three ideas, but assuredly you do not own a single woman.

All. The idea! let us have the idea!

Albert. This it is, my lords. It is simple and wonderful, and I am astonished that it did not occur to any of you before me.

All. Let us have it.

Albert, solemnly. Let us have an orgy! An orgy is indispensable if we are to be fully up to the mark. It is the one and only thing we lack. We can make ourselves perfect and spend a very pleasant evening.

All, with frantic enthusiasm. Bravo! Bravo!

Albert. There is nothing so up-to-date as an orgy. Every new novel that comes out has an orgy; let us likewise have ours. An orgy is as necessary to a manly life as to a book published by Eugène Renduel.

I really do not quite know why I have adopted dialogue in order to relate to you this truthful tale. It

is plain that it does not suit it, and the foregoing pages are a masterpiece of bad taste. I do not believe it is possible to write in a more tiresome and pretentious way. Each speaker seizes upon the remark of the one who has preceded him and sends it back like a shuttlecock from a battledore.

I am inclined to the belief that the sole motive which has led me to perpetrate such an abomination is the desire to fill out the greatest possible number of pages with the smallest possible number of sentences. I do hope and pray from the bottom of my heart that this blessed story, entitled "The Bowl of Punch," may drag on to page 350, which forms my Pillars of Hercules, beyond which I must not pass, for if I come short or go beyond, my book will be either too small or too bulky, both of which are dangers to be equally dreaded.

The dialogue form commends itself because it spins out well; each question and each reply is separated by the names of the speakers in italics, and one can, with a little skill, write a whole page without putting in more than five or six lines, provided one takes care to adopt a style marked by brevity and many breaks. In the "Chestnuts out of the Fire,"

there is one page that has but thirteen syllables. It is the *nec plus ultra* of that style, and it is given to very few to attain such heights.

"... Vestigia pronus adoro."

Never mind, I give up the dialogue business, for the present, at least, and the reader will be the gainer by two or three square inches per page of exclusively admirable thoughts, which I have contracted with my most dear publisher to furnish.

Such grandeur of soul on my part is all the more after the manner of the ancients and worthy of being lauded, because it postpones the happy moment when I shall finger the money that is due me for this marvellous volume, itself intended to work the regeneration of society and to aid humanity on the road to the future.

If you should desire to know, my dear reader, why I want money, I shall answer, *primo*, as does Gubetta to Lucrezia Borgia, —

"In order to have it."

which is most logical; *secundo*, in order to purchase old Japanese vases and Chinese figures, and *tertio*, so that I may eat flawn and fried potatoes on the quays and

boulevards, which no one can consider subversive of the established order of things or leading to contempt of the citizen monarchy.

Now for the bowl of punch!

If you do not suffer from gastritis, which I most heartily hope you do not, O my venerable reader, hold out your glass and let me pour you out some of that delectable drink. And you, O charming fair reader (for it cannot be doubted that you are charming), hold out yours also, so that I shall not spill any on the cloth. Very likely you will say that it is horribly strong, and you will pout in the prettiest possible way and make the loveliest of faces as you say so, but none the less you will drain the cup to the dregs, and you will be all the better for it, you and your chaste friends.

"Ay! ay! a pyramidal, a phenomenal orgy," cried the revellers in chorus. "A mad, wild-haired, howling orgy, as in Balzac's 'Chagreen Skin,' in Janin's 'Barnave,' in Eugène Sue's 'Salamander,' in Bibliophile Jacob's 'Divorce.'"

"No, no! Not the latter! It is Empire! It is shocking bad hat!"

"As in the same writer's 'Dance of Death.'"

"That will do; it is mediæval at least, and has an air to it."

"Who stands by 'The Skin'?"

"I do!" "And I!" "And I!"

"Very good; come this way," said Philadelphus.

The disciples of Balzac placed themselves on his right.

"Who is for 'Barnave'?"

"We four."

"On my right also. You are the aristocrats of the orgy, and we shall guillotine you at the end, between the cheese and the fruit."

The Janinphiles, Janinlâtres, or Janinians, for these three words are all equally correct in formation, placed themselves by the side of the Balzacians.

"Which are the roystering blades?"

"We are! we are!"

"On my left, the roysterers."

They proceeded to his left.

"Where the vagabonds?"

"This way; this way."

And a number of hands were raised.

"On my left, with the roysterers. You are democrats, and therefore you shall chew caporal while these

gentlemen smoke Maryland; that is why you shall drink cheap wine, like Barbier's girls, while the others shall drink champagne. You shall scorch your throats with rum and arrack, with the fieriest of forty-rod lightning and blue-ruin, while they shall moisten theirs with the unctuous liqueurs of the isles. And this shall prove to you, scallawags that you are, that the aristocrats are as much superior to you as Cyprus wine is superior to Brie wine."

The vagabonds ranged themselves by the side of the roysterers.

"Very good; now, where are we to hold the kermess?"

"Not here; there is no room."

"In Theodore's house, then; his house in the suburb, you know. It is roomier. What think you?"

"All right. And when is the orgy to come on? It is now six o'clock."

"At midnight; we shall need the time to prepare."

"Talking of that, how are we to manage for the decoration of the room?"

"Faith, I do not know, — unless we have a number of compartments as in 'Le Roi s'amuse.' It strikes me that it will be difficult to conciliate Balzac's mil-

lionaire's dining-room and Paul-Louis Jacob's kitchen, Jules Janin's private retreat and Sue's Saint-Tropez' inn."

"The thing bristles with difficulties, and time is flying. Let us adopt, for this occasion only, the undefined place Corneille proposes in the prefaces to his tragedies: a place which is neither a room, nor an antechamber, nor a house, nor a street, but which is a little of each of them. Theodore's chamber shall be simultaneously a kitchen, a drawing-room, an inn, and a boudoir; we shall take a lot for granted and help ourselves to delude ourselves. There shall be a horse-shoe table; one of the ends shall be laid with a fine damask cloth, china plates, glass-ware and silver plate; the other with a scrap of sail-cloth, cheap crockery, stone jugs and pewter forks."

"What about women? We must have women."

"I shall look after the women," said Rudolph, "but only so far as the fashionable side of the orgy goes. I know the pick of the lot in this line, and I shall bring you women who may fairly be called the élite of society. As regards the others, send along the first females you come upon; the uglier and viler they are, the better they will be."

"So be it. We count on you, Rudolph."

"You may trust me."

And after much hand-shaking, the Young Frances separated in order to look after the preparations for the orgiacal mysteries. Theodore hastened home, cleared out of the room whatever might be in the way; sent for brandy, rum, and a quantity of wine; personally installed a *chef* and three or four assistants at the ranges, and forthwith the pots, pans, and pipkins set to work, bubbled and steamed and flipped and flopped in the jolliest way possible.

Sancho, Falstaff, Panurge, and all Rabelais' gorging monks would have been filled with joy and have licked their chops merely if allowed to eat their bread seasoned with the scents that came from the kitchen.

The place of assembly had the strangest appearance. On one side there were elegant chairs and a splendid table service, with tapers in gilded candelabra. On the other, oaken settles, boards placed on trestles, big tallow or pitch candles in tin candlesticks; in short, the greatest contrast.

The house, brilliantly lighted up, flamed from every window and door, and cast floods of disdainful light upon the other neighbouring houses, which had gone to

bed at nine o'clock and closed their eyes until the next morning should come, like sensible houses and true bourgeoises that they were.

Meanwhile the cabs were beginning to drive up with much shouting and swearing. Curious figures flitted between the doors of the carriages and the door of the house. Now it was powdered marquises, in full dress, sword at the side, hilt well down, point well up, giving their hand to countesses in hoop-skirts, rouged, patched, bespangled, and befanned; or again sailors, with glazed hats on their heads, their fists on their hips, their pipes in their jaws, and a strumpet on their arm; or again dandies with high neckties, stiff, set up, well gloved, escorting ladies laden with feathers, flowers, gems, and ribbons; or vagabonds and rascals, in short cloaks and hoods, and tall feathers three feet long, dagger in hand, oaths on their lips, pell-mell with gipsies and lewd women, in loud-coloured skirts brilliant with spangles.

The row these people made caused the neighbours to wake up, to rub their eyes, to put on their spectacles, and to look out of the window, greatly surprised at such a disturbance at so improper an hour. Behind the blinds could be seen cotton night-caps with patri-

archal tufts, mysterious night-gear, and chaste snoods. More than one grocer, who had given up business, caught a cold in the head that night; more than one grisette forgot to turn down the corner of the page in the novel she had just begun, and more than one amorous cat, dazed by the unwonted light and the unusual noise, fell from the roof into the street.

Every new arrival was greeted with frantic hurrahs; the panes rattled in the sashes and the plates jigged on the dresser, just as if there were an earthquake going on.

The worthy bourgeois of the quarter, not knowing what might be the cause of the row, imagined that it was going to be a second performance of the Immortals for the benefit of the Republic. The toothless old dames betook themselves to the cellars, convinced that the end of the world had come, and that God was punishing France for having turned out Charles X.

A subscriber to the "Constitutionnel," the same man who utters such ingenious remarks in the fourth act of "Antony," affirmed that it was a Jesuit meeting, for quite a number of the guests were long-haired, a particularly Jesuitical trait.

A subscriber to the "Gazette" swore by all he held holy that it was the board of directors assembling in secret conclave to mutually behead each other and to eat the flesh of babes and sucklings, according to their evil habit.

A reader of Jay's books — ay, indeed! incredible as it may seem at the first blush that Jay should have any readers — maintained that it was Romanticists convened for the purpose of insulting the busts of the great, and burning the works of the immortal dead, whom modesty forbids my naming.

The guests took their places: the Balzacians and the Janinians at the aristocratic end; the others lower down. The funny thing was that by each plate was put a copy of "Barnave," of "The Chagreen Skin," of "The Salamander," or of "The Dance of Death," carefully opened at the description of the orgy, so that each one might conscientiously follow the text and duly keep up the proper style.

The first courses were disposed of and the first lot of bottles emptied without anything remarkable happening or anything out of the way being said. Not much else was heard besides the rattle of knives and forks, the clinking of glasses, and the sounds of deglutition

and mastication, with strident laughter breaking in now and then.

From time to time one leaf was turned over upon another with a rustle as of satin.

"Hang it all!" said one of the Balzacians, "I have got no farther yet than the description of the first course. That beggar Balzac is never done; his descriptions, in this respect, resemble my father's sermons."

"I have at least ten pages to get through before reaching the right spot," shouted a roysterer from the other end of the room. "I have already drunk two or three bottles of wine, and Frederick has done the same, yet none of the effects described in 'The Salamander' have condescended to put in an appearance. Rudolph's nose has not changed colour; it is still red only, although Eugène Sue distinctly says that in a characteristic orgy red turns purple and purple turns violet."

"That 's all right; it 's only that we are not drunk enough yet. Keep it up!"

"Keep it up!" sang out the company.

And although they were all pretty drunk already, they poured themselves out a succession of flowing bumpers.

It is noticeable that writers who describe orgies, and writers of obscene books, exaggerate human capacity in the most improbable manner. Some of them pour into the frame of a wretched little hero, six feet tall at most, ten times more punch and wine than the great tun at Heidelberg could hold. Others cause amorous striplings to perform labours of love that would exhaust several dozens of Hercules. I should like to know what is the object of such exaggeration. Possibly it is a way of indirectly flattering the reader; I am inclined to think it is. At all events, such books are most pernicious; they cause wine-dealers and little girls to feel contempt for us, for when they compare us with these grandiose types, they cannot help thinking us indifferent topers and still more indifferent bed-fellows.

As I have unfortunately a narrow chest and a pretty bad digestion, and consequently can drink scarcely anything but milk and water, I have to leave my glass untasted by me, while my companions drain theirs, and in truth resemble pumps or funnels more than baptised Christians.

Until they are quite dead drunk, I shall, in order to pass the time, indulge, my dear reader, in a very brief description that, with the help of God and epithets,

shall not be more than five or six pages long. I do not know whether you remember — and why should you remember it? Do not men forget their dogs and their mistresses? — that I promised to regale you with the present day beauty of style and manner of speech.

You must be tired of hearing me jabbering in a vulgar dialect, like the uncouth lout I am, and probably will remain until it pleases Heaven to remove me from this world.

This coming description shall be as fine as that with which begins this pantheistic and palingenetic tale. If, however, though I do not believe this will prove to be the case, it should not satisfy you, I hope the ladies will excuse me on account of my lack of experience in such matters.

It was certainly a strange sight to see all these young fellows assembled round the table; the feast had the air of being a reunion of wizards and demons.

Pshaw! that is a stinking beginning; it is the stock image of 1829. It is as idiotic as yesterday's newspaper, as stale as this morning's news. If you are not hard to please, reader mine, I can tell you I am, and

like Cathos and Magdelon of the "Précieuses ridicules," even my socks are bought from the swagger hosier. And my descriptions also are according to the latest pattern. Therefore, let us try again.

Oh! the orgy giving to the winds its heaving breasts, red with kisses; the orgy, shaking out its perfumed hair upon its bare shoulders, dancing, singing, shouting, holding one hand out to this man and the other to that one; the orgy, hot courtesan, that yields readily to every fancy, that drinks punch and laughs, that stains the cloth and its gown, that dips its garland of flowers in a bath of Malmsey wine; the ribald orgy, showing its foot and its leg, letting its heavy head fall to right or left; the quarrelsome, blaspheming orgy, quick to snatch its stiletto from its garter; the quivering orgy that has only to stretch out its wand to turn an idiot into a poet and a poet into an idiot; the orgy that duplicates our being and sends fire running through our veins, sets diamonds in our eyes and rubies on our lips; the orgy, the only poetry that is possible in these prosaic days; the orgy —

Whew! that is a terrifically long sentence; longer a good deal than lasted the love of my latest mistress,

I can tell you. Let me moisten my lips and take breath. The hack that stands me in stead of Pegasus is quite blown and roars like a wind-broken moke.

I could have put it differently; like this, for instance: The orgy, with its laughter, its yells, its, etc., etc., for as many pages as I liked; but this form of sentence, which flourished last week, is now quite gone out, and, besides, the other is more wild-haired and dithyrambic.

I have come to the conclusion, my dear reader, that the lyrical portion of my description is sufficiently extensive, and, with your permission, I shall now pass on to the technical part.

I shall not say that the cloth looked like new-fallen snow, because I am not enough of a poet for that, especially in prose; but I shall take it on myself to affirm that it was very white indeed, and that it had probably been sent to the wash.

As for the glasses, there was no mistake about it, they had been really washed, and the decanters likewise. Each guest had a plate before him and a whole napkin to himself; he also had the use of a knife, spoon, and fork. I am not aware that these particulars are of any use, but I should scruple not to impart

them to the readers of this glorious tale, considering that when the subject is so great, nothing about it can be small.

I should much like to tell you here the component parts of this fanciful supper, but I must needs own, in all humility, that in matters culinary I am plunged in densest ignorance. I am unworthy of eating, for I have never been able to tell the left wing of a partridge from the right, and provided the wine is red and makes me tipsy, I drink it down piously and call it good wine. Yet it is necessary that you should know the name of every dish, of every bottle of liquor, of every mouthful of food eaten and drunk by the heroes of that memorable party.

I have never once in my life been at a swell dinner. My customary pittance consists of very humble and very commonplace dishes; and you have no idea what a trouble I am in when trying to ascertain the names of a score of dishes queer enough to compose the bill of fare of this astounding feast.

What soup am I to make them eat? Shall it be rice or Julienne? Horrors! such soups are fit only for men with an income from the funds, or hosiers retired from business. I need a fashionable, a transcendental soup.

Hurrah! I have it! Turtle soup! Have you ever eaten turtle soup? The devil take me if I ever have. I have never seen any, not even smelt any, but all the same it must be a wonderful soup.

And after that?

The turtle itself, in its shell, on a layer of parsley, for a boiled joint.

And after that?

After that? After that? Confound you, do you suppose that it is as easy to compose a meal as a poem? I can tell you that it would be easier for a cook to write a good tragedy than for a tragic author to make up a good dinner.

All the same, I see plainly that if I go on in this way I shall be running the risk of making my heroes eat tiger chops, camel steaks, and crocodile fillets, instead of regaling them with suitable dishes duly approved by Carême. But what am I to do? I can think of but one way of getting out of the hobble.

Mariette! Mariette!

Yes, sir.

Bring me your cookery book.

Here it is, sir.

Now I shall simply transcribe the menu for a dinner for twenty-four people. In that way we shall at least be sure of what they are eating.

But the devil! It is only "The Home Cookery Book," instead of "The High Art Cookery Book," as I supposed. There is not a single menu for twenty-four persons, and the dishes do not appear to be at all anacreontic. Hang it all, you will have to put up with it for the present.

I transcribe literally, —

TABLE OF FOURTEEN COVERS, WHICH WILL ANSWER FOR A DINNER FOR TWENTY GUESTS

First Course

In the centre, a centrepiece, which remains throughout the dinner.

(Good!)

At each end, a soup:

Cabbage soup.

Cucumber soup.

Four side-dishes for the four corners of the centrepiece:

A pigeon pie.

A pie of two spring chickens, with tasty sauce.

A pie of breast of veal as stewed chicken.

(It is possible that this is plain enough, but I do not quite see how breast of veal can be stewed chicken. Never mind; the book says it is, *αὐτὸς ἔφη*, and it is faith only that saves.)

Hotch-potch of ox-tail.

(Look here. Would you eat an ox's tail? It strikes me a man would have to be a cannibal to do it.)

Six hors-d'œuvre for the two sides and the four corners of the table:

Broiled mutton-chops.

(I understand this quite easily. A very well written passage, very deeply thought out.)

Palate of beef in straight cut.

(Palate of beef! Come now; as well have a shoe vamp. For the matter of that, cooks appear to dish up any and everything. Sully's cook, seeing his master throw away an old pair of leather breeches, said to him, "Why do you throw away those breeches? Give them to me; I will make an ambassador eat them." *Straight cut:* have you any idea what that means? It 's High Dutch to me, and Kant and Hegel are easier to understand.)

Black pudding of rabbit.

(A comical duck, that cook, to turn out a rabbit black pudding. Rabbit black pudding strikes me as very funny, and I have no doubt it will prove highly successful.)

Cauliflowers as bread.

(Cauliflower is a vegetable worthy of esteem, with which I am intimately acquainted, and which I appreciate as it deserves to be appreciated. I usually eat it dressed with oil, for I cannot bear white sauce. I shall not comment upon the expression "as bread;" not because I understand what it means, far from it, but that I am really ashamed of being ignorant of such simple matters, and I thought that if I did not say anything about it, you would assume that I know exactly what it is.)

Two hors-d'œuvre of savory patties for each side.

(Patties are a happy thought, and the adjective "savory" is admirably chosen.)

Second Course

Two joints to follow the soup:

A joint of beef.

A loin of veal roasted on the spit.

. . . . .

The devil take it! I shall never be done if I try to write the whole thing down. Just think! There is another whole page written in as lofty a style as the foregoing one; it is impossible to devise more substantial phraseology; every word stands for an attack of indigestion. And all that mass of game and meats is for fourteen people! Why, there would be enough there to feed fourteen Gargantuas, a whole host of Pantagruelistic diners for a fortnight!

This, however, is only the technical part, and I fail to see that you have given me any cause to spare you the picturesque part, while these gentlemen are busy drinking and trying to become characteristic.

Here goes:—

White tapers, transparent as stalactites, and giving out perfumed odours, are burning in tall candlesticks. The rosy and bluish flame plays around the wicks, now steadily, now blown about. Under the influence of the draughts that traverse the room and of the gestures of the guests, it rises at times straight as a dagger, at others flows out like a mane. It is repeated in the innumerable facets of the glassware, and reflected by the projections on the silver plate and the china. Every

utensil is dotted with a sparkling spangle and shimmers with a reflection of its own. Everything is gleaming and glistering: the satin of bosoms and shoulders, the satin of the gowns, the diamonds in the necklaces, the diamonds in the glances, the pearls in the mouths and pearls in the ears; the many beams cross and mingle and break; iridescent flashes play under every eyelid; the guests are caught in a brilliant mist, a sort of luminous dust. The orgy is on the flood. Tongues are loosened, hands meet, confidences and love words are being exchanged; the guests eat, laugh, sing; the glasses go round and clink against each other, bottles are breaking, champagne corks fly to the ceiling, plates are swept, the wrong knee is pressed, and altogether there is the most lovely racket going on, and a row that the deafest man could not but hear.

That, I think, suffices to show that at need I can write a description, and you had better be thankful that I consent to stop here, for I could go on for a week in this strain — meal-hours excluded — without being in the least put about or having to deny myself to visitors, to stop smoking my cigar or talking to my friends.

Besides, I fancy my fellows must be about up to the right pitch by this time, and their conversation becoming interesting. Therefore I return to the dialogue form.

Theodore. At this point I have to pour wine inside my vest and slake my shirt's thirst; so it is expressly stated at page 171 of "The Chagreen Skin." Here is the place. And, confound it, I have on my very best vest, my velvet one, with engine-turned gold buttons. Never mind, we must be in character. I can always get another one. (*Here he pours a full glass of wine inside his vest.*) Wow! It's cold as the devil. I ought to have had it warmed first. I shall be lucky if I escape an attack of pleurisy. Beastly thing being wet all the way down in front like that!

Roderick, from the other end of the table. Here! don't make such a fuss over it; do the thing gracefully while you are about it. You can see for yourself that as you have taken Bénard's part, I am bound to shove a napkin down your throat. It is of no use your saying that you do not eat napkin and that it is too thready a dish for your digestion; I have nothing to do with that; the thing is down in black and white in the book; here

you are, page 152. So open your jaws, my lad, and down with it. Surely you would not spoil the scene for such a trifle and grieve your dearest friend? After all, a napkin is not half bad; I'll bet that once you have eaten it you will call for a second helping and will refuse to take anything else.

(*Perceiving that he is strewing flowers of rhetoric all in vain, he drops words and passes to acts. Rudolph yells and struggles.*)

Rudolph. May all the devils in hell seize you! By thunder! By the holy poker! (*Just then, Roderick, profiting by the hiatus occasioned by the utterance of this horrible oath, subtilely shoves half a yard of napkin down his throat.*

A guest. He is choking; leave him alone.

Another guest. He need only keep the end of it in his mouth; that will be sufficient to give the proper tone.

Philadelphus. He nearly swallowed his tongue as well as the napkin. Pity he did not quite do it.

Theodore. By Jove! This is the time when I have to toss a five-franc piece to see whether there is a God or not. (*He hunts through his pockets.*) Don't believe I shall find a single cursed coin. I shall miss my

effect, damn it all. (*He searches in his vest pockets.*) Nothing! I have not even a marked penny to keep the devil from flying off with me.

Albert. What are you hunting for like that, — turning all your pockets inside out, like a miser who is sorting out the bad money to give alms with?

Theodore. My boy, if you can lend me five francs, I shall be grateful to you until death us do part, and even beyond the grave.

Albert. Here you are. Try to remember to return them, and I will do without your gratitude.

Theodore. Heads or tails?

Albert. Heads that there is a God.

Theodore, spinning the coin; as it falls it smashes a glass. Heads it is.

Albert. The devil! That coin is a better Christian than any of us. It will go to Paradise when it dies, a privilege I do not expect to enjoy. My dear five-franc piece, you are telling a fib; there is no God. If there were, He would not allow Delrieu, who wrote "Artaxerxes," to live.

Rosette. No! no! I won't! It 's disgusting! Sir, gentlemen, stop now. I never! Why, you are all as drunk as lords.

Philadelphus. Now come, Rosette; be a good girl.

Rosette. I am a good girl; it 's you who are a bad man.

Philadelphus. Not a bit of it.

Several Guests. What 's up? What 's the matter? What makes Rosette play the prude for the first time in her life? It is shameful!

Rosette. Kiss me and fondle me as much as you please, I don't mind; that 's what I am here for; but I will never do what you want.

Philadelphus, getting up rather unsteadily on his hind legs. Gentlemen, I entreat you not to suppose that I am asking anything monstrous of this august princess; I should be sorry to have you entertain so poor an opinion of my manners. I have merely requested a truly pastoral little favour, which can have no consequences of any sort. It is nothing, a mere nothing; only a trifle. I want her to let me press her bosom with my foot. There is authority for this, and I have the right to do it. I am doing Raphael, and Rosette is Aquilina. Here is the passage on which I rest my claim, and you can judge for yourselves whether I am in the right or in the wrong: *If your two feet were not resting upon the lovely Aquilina.* It is Emil addressing

Raphael; there is no getting out of it; the statement is explicit.

Many Voices. He is right! He is right! Come, Rosette, be nice about it.

Rosette. Not much, I won't! Do you suppose I am going to let him bruise my breasts and dirty my gown just to satisfy his fancy?

An Officious Guest. He shall take off his boots.

(*Philadelphus removes his boots. Two or three of his comrades take hold of Rosette and lay her on the floor. Philadelphus lightly presses her bosom with his foot. Rosette screams, struggles, and ends by bursting out laughing. She ought to have done that from the first.*)

Women's Voices, at the other end of the table. Help! help!

A Roysterer. Well, what's the matter with you? What are you yelling for? We are only going to chuck you out of the windows. It's bacchanalian, it's wild-haired, and produces a gorgeous effect. There is nothing so far removed from the commonplace.

Laura. This is a regular cut-throat den.

A Guest. We are well bred; we are polite to the ladies; we'll open them up first — the windows, I mean, not the ladies. Let us avoid obscurity. A Frenchman is essentially polite.

Another Guest, not quite so drunk. Don't be afraid, my darlings; we are on the ground-floor and for fear of accidents we have taken the precaution to put mattresses outside.

Voices of Women and Other Voices. Oh! Oh! Damn it! Oh! Ah! Hang it all! *etc.*

(*The women are now thrown out of the windows. The economy of a few skirts is disarranged, and if the spectators had been fit to see anything, they would have beheld quite a number of things and some more.*)

Theodore. Wauch! Wooch!

A Kindly Soul. Hold his head for him.

Theodore. Woof!

A Joker. Stack him up with the others. When we have enough of them we'll smoke them so that they may be preserved to their respectable parents, in accordance with the recipe given in "The Salamander."

Albert. How many am I? It seems to me I am several, and that I could turn out a whole regiment in my own person.

Roderick. You are not even one. The nobler part of yourself has ceased to exist; it is drowned in the ocean of wine with which you have filled your paunch.

So you may be spoken of in the preterite definite: Albert was.

Albert. My glass must be on my right or my left, unless it is in front of me; yet I can't see it anywhere. Who has swallowed my glass? There must be thieves here. Shut the doors and search everybody until you find it. A decent fellow like me cannot be allowed to die of thirst for lack of something to drink. But here is a salad bowl that will beautifully make up for the glass. (*He pours in a whole bottle of wine, and drains the bowl at a draught.*) Jolly old chap, God, to have given wine to man. If I had been God, should have kept the recipe to myself. O thou divine bottle! I have always regretted not being a funnel rather than a man.

Roderick. In my opinion you are much more of a funnel than of a man.

Albert.

A funnel! a funnel! to be a funnel! . . . Accursed fate!
I am not a funnel!

Guillemette. My dearly beloved Malaquet, you gentle rascal, you have not entered into the spirit of your part, for you have omitted a most beautiful and attractive

passage: "They licked the floor that was covered with a gastronomical layer."

Malaquet. Do you suppose, you wench, that I am going to turn my tongue into a broom?

A General Shout. The bowl of punch! the bowl of punch!

A bowl of punch vast as the crater of Vesuvius, was placed on the table by a couple of the least groggy in the company.

The flames rose to the height of at least three or four feet, blue, orange, violet, red, green, white, and dazzling to behold. A draught of air, blowing in through an open window, made them quiver and tremble, so that they looked like the mane of a salamander or the tail of a comet.

"Out with the lights!" shouted the whole band.

The lights were put out, but the room remained as bright as before. The light from the bowl spread through the place and penetrated the darkest corners. It might have been the fifth act of a modern drama, when the hero ascends to heaven or climbs the scaffold amid a blaze of Bengal fire.

Over the faces already turned pale and idiotic by intoxication, played ugly greenish reflections that gave

them a deathly and corpse-like look. They resembled drowned bodies from the Morgue enjoying themselves.

This was the finest moment in the whole evening.

The burning punch was poured blazing into the glasses, that cracked and broke with a snap. In less than fifteen minutes not a drop was left, and the room was plunged in darkness intense.

But the row merely grew louder. It was a clang and clatter made up of a hundred different noises which could but most imperfectly be reproduced, even with the assistance of onomatopæia; oaths, sighs, cries, grunts, the rustling of rumpled dresses, the smashing of plates, and innumerable other sounds.

Bang! bang!	Frou! frou!
Glin! glin!	Glac!
Brr . . .	Ow! Ow!
Woof!	Ah!
Fie!	Oh!
Ouch!	Huh!
Pshaw!	Oof!

These various noises at last melted into a single one, a mighty snoring that would have drowned the pedal notes of a great organ.

Phœbus, having made a night of it, took off his cotton night-cap with the jonquil yellow tuft, combed his fair wig a bit, got into a cab and started to illumine the universe. The first thing he saw was our fellows sleeping like dead men. Highly indignant, he let fly at them a superb, richly gilded beam, in order to wake them and make them ashamed of their laziness, but he might as well have saved himself the trouble.

He went on his way round the neighbourhood and found everybody asleep. In vain did he pull ears, and slap faces; not a soul got up before Phœbus's own time for bed. The deafening noise of the orgy had kept all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood awake until dawn. The husbands complained more bitterly than their wives, and nine months later, or thereabouts, the population of the quarter was increased by several extremely interesting prospective grocers.

As for my heroes, they were terribly taken aback when they found their faces had turned either green or blue. They washed themselves with might and main, but to no purpose; they could not get rid of the ghastly hue. The reflections of the punch clung to their skins and could not be removed; they looked like the Green

Man at the Porte-Saint-Martin. God had allowed this to occur in order to punish them for attempting to make themselves different from what He had created them.

And this ought to teach young fellows how dangerous it is to try to live a modern novel.

I omitted to state that the estimable company, on issuing from the banqueting hall, was intercepted by the police and led to prison on a charge of making a disturbance during the night.

Blessed are the ways of Providence!

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